The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching

Ansley C. Moore:

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VOL. XXII, NO. 12 DECEMBER, 1951

*By Ansley Cunningham Moore**

HOME PASTOR SPEAKS TO

*Written after consultation with W. Bruce Wilson, member of the Foreign Mission Board of the United Presbyterian Church, and H. Kerr Taylor, formerly educational secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.

WELCOME home! The churches in your native land have learned of your furlough with interest and delight. Your coming has been anticipated by many. Your letters, which are revealing vignettes of your daily life and work, have kept us in touch with you. We thank God often for your courage and daring, and for the faith that enabled you to undertake such a difficult task.

Now that you are back in America and have months ahead of you in the home church, you are naturally thinking of how you can spend your time to the best possible interest of the church and the work you represent. With this in mind, a fellow minister in the home church desires to counsel with you, not with the idea that he is an expert in these matters; but we home pastors are here right along, and during the course of the years we sit in the pew and listen to many returned missionaries. We hear the comments of our people. Perhaps our experience with the American church and with returned missionaries can be of some service to you. Remember that you and we are in the same great work; we represent the same Kingdom purpose and the same Christ is the Lord and Savior of us all. Here the effort is to help orient you so that your coming home will stir a vast interest in the cause of world missions, the primary task of the Christian church.

Since You Went Away

When Americans are out of this country for several years and then return to their homeland, it is important for them to remember that life has flowed on since they went away. Life has a way of doing that. Some customs have changed, styles have changed, and even the atmosphere of the church and perhaps of the country may have changed. Certainly the mood of the masses is likely to be different as this nation has been played upon by the impact of domestic issues and world affairs. Life moves very rapidly in America, as you well know, and even a matter of two or three years makes a real difference. The church is a part of this cultural milieu and therefore is affected in much the same way as other institutions.

The missionary home on furlough will want to remember this and be responsive to it. For some years you perhaps have been living among a people with an entirely different background from ours; their tempo of living, their intellectual outlook, their hopes and fears may be quite different from those here in America. Strangely enough, the more acclimated you became to your adopted country, the more completely you entered into the native life of your new people, the more likely you are to be out of step when you return to America. This is perhaps the reason why some of the most successful missionaries on the foreign field have been known to make the poorest impression on the home church when they returned to tell their tale.

This whole matter of orientation in the home church is important as it affects your usefulness while on furlough. Therefore, this American minister has thought it worth while to write these words in the hope that they will help returning missionaries to be effective in arousing interest in missions with their first-hand, on-the-spot report on the work abroad. Several things come to mind at once which the missionary might remember as he or she accepts speaking engagements in the home churches.

Making Contact

First, it is well for the missionary to talk with a dozen or so intelligent, active laymen and ministers in the home church about American life and American church life before setting out to speak. Such persons would be glad to answer your questions. Ask questions along these lines: What are the growing edges in the American church today? What are the main issues disturbing the churches? What world affairs have the churches been concerned about? What do Americans think *today* of my adopted country? It may be wise to make a memorandum of questions asked you when you are having dinner with your family and friends immediately upon your return. This helps you to make contact with your audiences.

Then before speaking to a particular group, ask specific questions about that group, such as: Who

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Missionaries and home-church pastors who read this article will be better able to plan to make best use of opportunities to present missions

RETURNED MISSIONARY

are these people—a missionary society most of whom are already interested in missions, or a mixed group in a Sunday evening supper club to whom missions must be "sold"? Exactly where do I, as the missionary, fit into the program? Am I the main speaker, or will there be others? How much time will be allowed me? Be sure you do not violate this courtesy, as it may be that the minister at some pains has made these arrangements and has worked in this speech on missions over the heads of some, and you must not fail him.

'Briefing' Your Listeners

It is wise to give careful attention to the subject matter of your address. No one in his right mind would tell you what to say. That is for you to decide. But we ministers listen to a lot of missionaries and we know some things you ought not to say. No one is interested in what time your boat sailed or what you had for breakfast on the ship. The difficulties of travel, which consume so much of your effort in coming home, are seldom interesting matter for a speech on missions. Many Americans have traveled, too. Remarks made to you on the ship may be interesting, but you don't have time to tell *everything,* and usually these things contribute little to interest in missions.

Specifically, tell briefly where your adopted country is located. Give a very short summary of its cultural and religious background. Then locate the denominational work, and your own work. Many missionaries erroneously assume that everybody knows these elementary facts. Be definite, but brief, in telling these facts.

Then try to outline the main type of work with which you are familiar, telling only the most important things. After this, you may want to give in terse outline the principal problems of the country and of the Christian work in which the denomination is engaged. All this may be brightened with touches of local color, humor, personal experiences, etc., but the missionary will have to be careful that not all the time is spent telling about one appealing little girl or boy in the mission Sunday school. We have seen the tragic spectacle of able missionaries spending one-third of their total speaking time acknowledging the introduction, mentioning local people of the long ago, and then becoming frustrated under the pressure of trying to cut their speech as they go. American congregations are frequently clock-minded, and your ability to say a lot in a few words will often mean the difference between getting your message across and failing utterly. It is important that you put "meat" into your address, show some familiarity with trends in your adopted country and with political and economic problems as well as religious matters, as there are many educated people in your American audiences and—please try to remember—many of them are lukewarm on missions.

Fitting In

Small details of your presentation should be thought of ahead of time. Now that churches give much thought to their orders of worship and now that the churches' programs are so full, it is well to make sure that you fully understand *all* the details before you speak. Arrive ahead of time. Look up the minister. Ask to see the platform and the lectern. Go over the order of worship and learn exactly what to do. Uncertainty or hesitation gives an American audience a feeling that you do not know what you are doing, either here or there! Judge the size of the auditorium and test the public address system, if there is one. Ask about the acoustics. Let someone listen to you speak for a moment or two to see if you can be heard in the rear. You may as well stay home if they can't hear you. Many missionaries miss out in getting their story to the American church by poor delivery, poor voice, poor timing. Do not read your address. Learn to use notes without a flurry. Keep the illustrations short. Be sure they illustrate; many don't. We are not being facetious here. We are trying to help you to get the great story of missions over to our people, many of whom do not believe in the cause you represent and many of whom do not care one way or the other. We are so eager for you to succeed! We are so anxious for you to dramatize this great Christian enterprise and win friends for it!

What They're Thinking

Keep in mind that the impression you make as a Christian character is more important than what you say. People must have the feeling that you are a man or woman of God, that you know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, that you have had a religious experience worth sharing, and that you are engaged in the most urgent and compelling task of our time. It is not enough to reveal that

you can teach people abroad how to run a tractor or speak English or make a dress or cook a meal or care for babies hygienically. This is good, but the audience is often wondering what you have to give *beyond* that. How could this person impart enthusiasm for Christ's cause? is a question often in the minds of listeners. The people will want to feel that you are on intimate speaking terms with your Lord. Tell honestly about the fruit of your work. Are some being won to Him? That is the question.

Make sure that you thank the people graciously for what they have done across the years for missions. Do not let your irritation over the sight of wasted money in America make you forget that some in your audiences have sacrificed magnificently for the work. Make them feel that it was worth doing. The dividends paid these stockholders are not as tangible as a quarterly check, and so they have to be told again and again of the eternal significance of what the Christian church is doing.

Try to maintain a balance in your talk between the devotional and the factual. Yours is not a sermon. It is not a lecture. Usually it is better not to preach a regular sermon when you are invited as a missionary to speak. Yours should properly be a religious address. The religious part is important. It should be devotional in nature so that the hearts of the people will be touched and their wills moved to action. But it should also be factual. People need information about the various fields and the work, but the interest span now is very short since television, radio, newspapers, movies and all forms of advertising scream on every hand for the attention of our people.

A Great Succession

Last of all, remember that you represent a great cause. You stand in a great tradition. Pride is justifiable here. Behind you stand St. Paul, Pantaenus, St. Augustine, William Carey, Samuel J. Mills, Robert Morrison, Adoniram Judson, David Livingstone—immortals all—and you have every reason to be proud, very, very proud. Do not be apologetic. You have heard the call of Christ. Yours have been itching feet and you have set them upon the highways and the high seas of the world that the gospel might be preached. Make the people see that when Christianity is virile, true to its nature, it is always like that. When it settles down, it becomes stagnant and dies. But when it strikes its tent and marches across the world, it remains strong and vibrant. Your missionary address to the home church, if given prayerfully and with finesse, can be a religious experience for your hearers. It should draw them to Christ as Savior, first of all, and then it should drive them to the first responsibility of the Christian: to witness to Christ's saving power to the ends of the earth. David Lloyd George's pointed words are still a challenge to every real preacher: "Religion is humanity's oldest allegiance and will live when all the Ceasars are dead. Prophets, mount your pulpits! The gospel must again today, as in every crisis, save the world."

We pastors will be sitting in the pew listening to you, praying that you will represent Christ and the cause of missions well. It is a fearful responsibility and we feel it deeply when you missionaries are speaking, precisely because we ourselves so often fail. But it is a glorious opportunity.

You no doubt listen to some of us when we visit your fields and you could tell us much about what to say and do, and to leave unsaid. Now that we've had our say, it's your turn.

God bless you, our missionary friends!

Browning caught the sense of the whole thing when he wrote:

> No, when the fight begins within himself,
> A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
> Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—
> He's left, himself, i' the middle: the soul wakes
> And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!
> Never leave growing till the life to come!

A Reader's Prayer

By Marshall Wingfield

Pastor First Congregational Church, Memphis, Tennessee

O GOD of wisdom, we give thee thanks for the hunger of mind which seeks for knowledge, for the fortitude which strives against ignorance, and for the patience which has enriched us with the arts and sciences. We thank thee for the skills of communication which enable us to hear those who once lived in distant ages as well as those who now live in distant places. With more books around us than we can hope to read, help us to be wise in our choices. Grant us discerning minds that we may separate the vital from the trivial. Give us minds free from prejudice that we may honestly examine writings which others have condemned. May we resolve to know before we judge and to understand before we censure. Save us from the thralldom of the superficial and from the conceit which imagines we are wiser than we are. Help us to read without foolish pride and vain opinion. If what we read rebukes us, grant us the humility rightly to receive the rebuke. Save us from accepting error when books come to us in words of charm, and from rejecting truth when it comes to us in books that are heavy and dim. Deliver us from being amused at the price of being stained. Give us minds that will make a permanent home for noble thoughts. Keep us ever grateful for the singing of the poets, for the visions of the prophets, for the knowledge of the sages, and for the long memories of history. Open our ears to the voices of eternity which sing through time and grant at last that we may stand before thy Opened Books without fear. Amen.

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Three Lessons from Three Wise Men

By Ray W. Wallace

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." Matthew 2:1-2.

WHO were the three wise men? They were probably Persian priests, students of the stars, ancient questers after the infinite and mysterious wisdom of eternity. They were men who were willing to go to great trouble and endure large sacrifices in order to find the truth. Perhaps they were the forerunners of such a brilliant mind as Blaise Pascal, who declared: "Nothing gives assurance except the truth; nothing gives repose except the sincere search for truth." But the Gospel gives us scant information.

We may be sure, however, that the coming of the wise men was not as simple as Matthew describes it. He glosses over some of the realities involved in the situation. He says nothing at all about the dangers the wise men faced, the constant presence of unseen, unknown enemies, or the investment of time and material wealth. It is interesting that so far as we know the wise men themselves said nothing about the difficulties through which they had gone; they did not complain about their long, tedious journey with its many hazards. This is a fact which suggests that the things we really want to do are not themselves exacting and tiring. For those who follow a star the journey is not exhausting.

I

When the three wise men arrived in this foreign country they went to Herod, believing that with the far-flung intelligence organization of a king he would know what was happening in the land. But Herod knew nothing, and even the wisest among his own wise men could only say that these visitors should go to Bethlehem.

So they continued to Bethlehem, "little among the thousands in Judah," where they saw the star shining once again. And "when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

Fredrick Robertson, famed preacher of Brighton, had this comment to make about that verse:

> Perhaps the hearts of some of us can interpret that. There are some who have seen the star that shone in earlier days go out; quench itself in black vapors or sour smoke. There are some who have followed many a star that turned out to be but an *ignis fatuus*—one of those bright exhalations which hover over marshes and churchyards, and only lead to the chambers of the dead or the cold damp pits of disappointment: and oh, the blessings of "exceeding joy," after following in vain—after inquiring of the great men and learning nothing—of the religious men and finding little—to see the star at last resting over "the place where the young Child lies"—after groping the way alone, to see the star stand still—to find that Religion is a thing far simpler than we thought—that God is near us—that to kneel and adore is the noblest posture of the soul. For, whoever will follow with fidelity his own star, God will guide him aright.

At last the wise men's faithfulness was rewarded. There they left their treasures: gold, proper gift for a king; frankincense, used in the priestly office; and myrrh, a valuable spice used for burial purposes.

As we ponder over this strange event, we realize that in our own pilgrimage it is a similar spirit of faith we need. Sometimes we move through days and experiences when stars fade. We feel fagged and worn, tired, easily frayed, dismayed, broken. Evil seems too great, wrong too powerful, burdens too staggering, and instead of continuing the fight within we are tempted to surrender to doubt and fear, thus being victimized by bitterness and scorn, unsatisfied cynicism and the futility of indifference. When the star is lost from sight and we plod wearily in the darkness, this raging struggle of faith torments us. Shall we give up our quest, turn back, accept some lesser way? Or shall we plunge forward, confident that though now there is only darkness, there will soon be the glimmering of a star with its promise of light?

The first lesson of the three wise men is that the star shines for those who through faith make the venturing quest.

II

If that is the first lesson we learn, see the second: A sinister note of realism reminds us that those who follow stars must live in a world of people who do not believe in the stars. For while there was hopeful faithfulness in the hearts of the wise men, Matthew reminds us that "when Herod the king heard this, he was troubled."

It is not difficult to discover why Herod was troubled. His pride and sense of power were out-

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raged. He was king in Judea. What subversive hint was this of a new king who might challenge his power? To Herod's cruel and suspicious mind the first suggestion of the words of the wise men was that here was a new rival with whom he had to deal. He had managed other rivals, and the method he used was swift and deadly. In a mad rage he had killed his own wife. One man after another whom he had suspected of being pretenders to his throne, including two of his own sons, he had put to death. "Troubled" was a mild word to describe the emotions in the sullen heart of Herod.

So here, at the same moment in history with the men seeking after the message of the star, was another—strong, crafty, without mercy—who was alarmed and frightened, possessed now by both fear and hatred. However, Herod was not lacking in caution. Lest he cause alarm, he called the wise men and sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Bring me word that I too may come and worship him." It is not unusual for evil to masquerade in the garments of interest and concern for that which is good. The real intention of Herod was revealed in a malicious and cruel act, for when he realized that the wise men had betrayed him, he "was in a furious rage, and went and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old and under."

Is it not always true that those who live by faith, who follow a star, live in a world peopled by men and women who do not believe in the message of the stars? Can we forget that while we worship in warmth and comfort, coming to remember the gracious story of the birth of a Savior, we can if we will but listen hear the cries of little children, suffering in a world where men prefer death rather than salvation? Should we overlook those near and far away who look upon our worship as an act of soft stupidity, unworthy of the realism and toughness of a world like ours? In partially filled churches can we be unaware of those to whom Christmas represents merriment and who in irreverence desecrate the sacredness of the day?

This is the second lesson of the three wise men —for there yet are those who do not believe in the message of the stars.

III

There remains now a third impressive lesson, which is also very disturbing. Perhaps it should not be mentioned, but had you noticed?—these wise men came to worship but they did not remain to serve. In all fairness we must admit that this was their purpose. They were not Hebrews. They did not possess the cultural or religious tradition of the Jewish people. They were strangers from a far country who came following a luminous star, and leaving their gifts departed for their own home and land. Is it being disrespectful to suggest that this may be a telling parable of your own conduct? Have you noticed how often you come to worship and do not remain to serve?

There are so many who say with the wise men, "We would worship Christ!" Nicodemus was a wise man. He was recognized as one of the better informed men of his time. He came to Jesus under the disguise of darkness, but with an undisguised sense of admiration and an attitude of respect and appreciation not unlike worship. Yet he was unwilling to follow and serve. There have been many like Nicodemus, who have been attracted to Jesus, inspired by him, thrilled by his message, moved to exalted thought, but they have wanted to listen and learn—and then leave! They have been unwilling to serve.

This is one of the subtle temptations of Christmas and one of its largest threats: that we will come to this place, be caught up by the sentiment and suggestiveness of this story—the birth of a child, the visit of priests from a far country, and the song of the angelic host—and then leave without any further sense of duty and obligation. It was Muhammed Iqbal, a poet of Pakistan, who said with rare and discerning insight:

> An infidel before his idol
> With waking heart
> Is better than the religious man
> Asleep in his mosque

Christmas does not strike home until it has confronted you with the moral stature and authority of Jesus, and has wakened you to the necessity of an examination of yourself and the pointing of your life toward God. Then you will find that one worships Christ only as he serves Christ.

And this is the third lesson of the three wise men.

TITLES AND TEXTS

What Pulpit Readers are Preaching About

J. CHANDLER ADAMS, First Congregational, Brecksville, Ohio. "Traits of a Christian Peacemaker." Matt. 5:9—*Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*

D. W. CHARLTON, Bethesda Methodist, Orrum, N. C. "The Evangel of the Warm Heart." Gal. 1:15, 16f.—*God . . . who called me by his love, saw fit to reveal his son in me, so that I might tell the good news of him among the Gentiles.*

J. FRANCIS F. PEAK, First Baptist, Wildwood, N. J. "How to Keep Out of Trouble." Jude 24—*Now to him who is able to keep you from falling. . . .*

CHARLES R. WOODSON, First Baptist, Hudson, Wis. "What Is Man?" Ps. 8:4a—*What is man, that thou art mindful of him?*

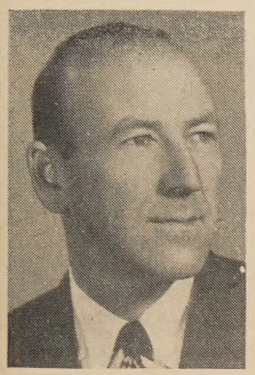
PAUL P. WALENTA, New Hartford Presbyterian, New Hartford, N. Y. *"Overcoming Our Inner Resentments through Self-Understanding."* Eph. 4:26—*Be ye angry, and sin not.*

FREDERICK A. ROBLEE, First Presbyterian, Bay City, Mich. "A Highway for Our God." Isa. 40:3—*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, that turneth the shadow of death into morning, and maketh the day dark with night; the Lord is his name. . . . The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light . . . even very dark, and no brightness in it. Amos 5:8, 18, 20.

And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am God . . . I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things. Isaiah 45:3, 7.

Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and guide our feet into the way of peace. Luke 1:78-79.



The Visitation from On High

By Roland H. Pantermuehl

IT IS of course more than just a coincidence that each of these passages, distinct and widely separated though they are, speaks of the same darkness obscuring the human situation. And it is more than a coincidence that such speaking of darkness is no longer a "speaking in an unknown tongue" to us. Once again we are aware of darkness overlying our human scene—and that just when we were beginning to think that it was being dissipated, that the mists were beginning to lift and the sun was about to break through; just then, and almost without our being aware of its coming, we are standing within a gathering gloom. This seems to be the perennial, constantly recurring nature of our human situation in this world: that men, who were created for light and who in varying degrees are aware of this their destiny, are nevertheless surrounded by darkness. Those ancient Hebrew prophets had an uncanny way of being timeless in their language. Wherever we find the record of man at grips with his most urgent problems, we find this quest for light in the midst of darkness.

There are many ways in which men try to dispel the surrounding darkness or to deal with the anxiety and sense of depression it occasions. It may seem incredible that in the face of all that has happened and is happening in our world today there should still be this night the usual forms of New Year's Eve celebrations, and not only in the usual forms but these "bigger and better" than ever. It is incredible, or should be, that there can be reveling in abandonment and carousing in drunkenness while a stricken humanity is once again travailing in suffering and sorrow, while many of the young men of our land are dying, while our nation itself is being confronted with the most severe testing of its history; unbelievable that there should be those who, Nero-like, fiddle while Rome burns. But such is the duplicity of the human heart, and such the spiritual poverty of our time, that these things can be and are.

Not Ours to Judge

It is not for us to sit in judgment. We should realize how singularly inappropriate and unseemly such conduct must be at all times and particularly at a time such as this; yet, also, we must realize that those who are thus reveling are but bearing witness to the anxiety and confusion within their souls which they, in their way, are trying to dispel with a few hours of abandonment and forgetting. There is a bond that links us to all men everywhere. It is the bond of our common need as we "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." Those of us who have found our way into this house of prayer to share in the bread and the cup of a new covenant, know that this must be a time for a searching self-examination, not for the examination of others; a time for the recognition of our own need for light to lighten our darkness and "to guide our feet into the way of peace."

It is to seek him that we have come, who, as Amos says, "turneth the shadow of death into morning," but who also "maketh the day dark with night, . . . whose day is darkness and not light," who "forms the light, and creates darkness," from whom we receive both peace and evil. It belongs to the ofttimes startling insight of the prophets that the visitation from on high may come to men in either light or darkness; that the peace which men seek, or the things which men

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call evil—war and destruction and the ruin of cultures and civilizations—may equally be the instrument or channel of God's coming to men, of his activity in history. Nor is this insight limited to the prophets of the Old Testament. Jesus mourns over Jerusalem because this city failed to recognize the day of its visitation. He mourns not simply because the city will be destroyed; the destruction of the city was but incidental; the real tragedy was that there should have been that in the hearts of its populace which made its destruction inevitable, that there should have been such blindness that God could deal with the city only in this way.

"The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light." The visitation from on high, in which God reaches into our human situation and deals with it decisively, may come thus in darkness. It may assume the form of what men call evil, and yet it will still be the Day of the Lord; God's hand will still be in it—hand of One whose purpose in dealing with our human situation is always a beneficent purpose. This the prophets saw with singular clarity. Darkness may hold its own peculiar treasures. As Isaiah puts it: "And I will give thee the treasures of darkness" in order that—and this is what makes them treasures—"you may know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name"—who has to do with you, with you personally, in this visitation—"am God."

Message for Our Times

There is a message in this for our time, a time when many of us are deeply disturbed and troubled and have great difficulty in making any real sense of Advent and Christmas if not of the entire Christian message. It holds a message for us as we stand at the gate of another year and ask for light to lighten our darkness and "to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Men have tried in many and various ways to read some sort of meaning into history, into the course of human events, into the way in which things happen within our human scene. It would be interesting to examine each of these ways in some detail, but for our purpose it is enough to note first of all that man, as man, always does try to make sense, some sort of sense, of what happens to him and of what happens in the world about him. Meaning, which he at times tries to deny, is simply a requisite of his life as a human being. Then, second, we may note that all these attempts to find meaning in life and history have never been entirely satisfying; always each such interpretation finds itself confronted by certain disconcerting facts which give the lie to the structure of meaning that man has erected for himself. Man's empires and civilizations and cultures are tragic not only because they "rise and fall," but primarily because man hasn't been able to endow them with adequate meaning.

Over against all these various interpretations may be set the biblical understanding which sees human life and human history in terms of visitation and advent. Both life and history have no adequate meaning in themselves; they receive meaning only with reference to something or someone above and beyond it, coming into it and being active in it. The Bible sees that human life and history can be understood only in its relationship to One who created it and who both judges and redeems it. It can be understood, that is, only when seen under the "aspect of eternity," which "eternity" is constantly breaking into, visiting, this world of time and space, of change and decay. Our human situation is never merely obscured by darkness; things do not just go wrong in the world: it is being judged, it is being visited by the consequences of its folly. It is never a matter of indifference how we live, how we order our life and its relationships. It is never a matter of indifference how nations order their life and relationships. "God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

But this visitation, this judgment, is never merely destructive or punitive. To be sure, it is judgment upon those who have transgressed the will of their Creator, and it will be a darkness, so that there is no light in it at all; but it comes always as a cleansing, purifying judgment. The offer of that effect is always in it. It comes to redeem, to reclaim, to rescue, not from the consequences of evil but from evil itself.

'The Day of the Lord'

The Day of the Lord, as Amos saw so clearly, may be a day that is "very dark, with no brightness in it"; it may come as a long and terrible war; but it is still a visitation, and a visitation from on high, and in it is the "tender mercy of our God; whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us." I am fully aware that to speak of the "tender mercy of our God" in connection with such long and costly and destructive wars as we have known in our century may seem sheer insanity; but it will not upon second glance. Would we really prefer a world in which wrong did not produce certain and very undesirable consequences, a world in which men might deal unjustly and cruelly with one another and do it with impunity, a world in which there could not be a judgment on men's defiance of God's will? That men have defied God's will—of that there can hardly be either doubt or question. Now we are seeing in this world, in this scene of men's God-defiance, what looks exactly like a judgment: men being required to pay to the uttermost farthing the inhumanities they have visited upon each other. Before that judgment we may well tremble. But is there not here also, in this relationship of defiance and judgment, an unmistakable indication that God has not deserted his world, that he has not rejected and forsaken it, but visits it, is visiting it, from on high?

We tend to think of evil in terms of the things which are really the consequences of evil rather than the evil itself. We think of pain and suffering and sorrow, of war and disease and death, as evils, when as a matter of fact all these are the consequences, largely, of living in opposition to the

moral laws governing our universe. (And what we call "moral laws"—what are they other than the faithful insistence of God's love, of his "calling us each by our name"?) We confuse the wages of sin with sin itself, and we fear the wages of sin, but we do not fear the sin. We fear judgment, but we do not fear what is being judged. And that is the real darkness which obscures our human situation. With Isaiah we need to find the treasures of darkness, need to see that only "when thy judgments are in the earth, will the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness." We cannot be saved along with our sin. There can be no peace and harmony in the world along with unrighteousness and injustice. This darkness must first be dispelled, and it will be dispelled only when God's judgments are in the earth.

It belongs to our Christian faith to see that though it is a terrible thing to fall under the judgment of God, it is just here that our salvation has come nigh. For "his judgments are true and righteous altogether." And because we know that they are, and that even in his judgments there is the "tender mercy of God, whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us," we also know that we can end this old year in gratitude, and face the New Year in confidence and faith and trust rather than with fear and foreboding. The old year has brought nigh our salvation; it was of Him who "forms the light, and creates darkness," and the New Year will be in his keeping.

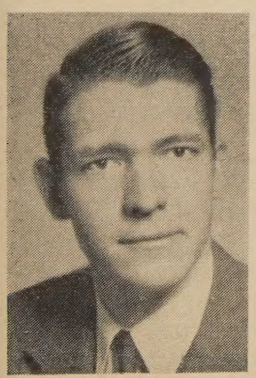
And I said to the man at the gate of the year: "Give me light that I may tread safely into the unknown." And he replied, "Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be better than light, and safer than a known way."—*M. L. Haskins.*

Born to Save

By John O. Mellin

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people. Matthew 1:21.

THE great Christian festival of Thanksgiving is past. The holiday season is over for a time. Some spent it in thanksgiving; others enjoyed a well deserved rest. However it was spent, the turkey is now hash and the football ticket stubs have all been thrown away. We are left either to settle down spiritually and emotionally or to seek some new thrill, some new start for the imagination to center upon to lift our average days above the humdrum of insensitivity.



For those liturgical churches which observe a complete calendar for the church year, the fourth Sunday before Christmas begins Advent. Advent is that period during which the coming of Christ is announced and is awaited. There is one word which is always associated with the coming and the birth of Christ. That word is "save." Matthew writes, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people." And in Luke's Gospel Jesus himself says, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Our immediate question is, Saved from what? These words of Jesus do not find us unless we are prepared for them.

The contemporary mood is always a sort of censor so far as Jesus is concerned. At our Rotary clubs in moments of seriousness we might turn to the Beatitudes and read and discuss the qualifications of those blessed, but we steer clear of the part about salvation. There is no sense in talking to people about a power sent from God to seek and to save those who are lost, if they do not think they are lost. Salvation is a vital subject only to the needy. Remember that old medieval carol:

Good Christian men rejoice,
With heart, and soul, and voice;
Give ye heed to what we say:
News! news! Jesus Christ is born today,
Calls you one and calls you all,
To gain his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!
Christ was born to save!

The meaning of the Christmas season will be unintelligible unless we understand it in terms of salvation.

Contemporary Mood

We are bold to say that the gospel in terms of salvation is more easily understood today than it was ten years ago. Today we have a vague if not articulate feeling that we are lost. We may not agree as to the causes for our failure but we know that something is wrong. Evil no longer can be easily equated with ignorance. Evil seems to move like a force through our world and our lives. Intelligent men have gone astray and it is difficult to tell what true reason is. We are lost and we must be saved. The message of Christmas was

JOHN O. MELLIN was called to succeed Julius Moldenhawer as pastor of New York's historic First Presbyterian in 1948 when he was 27 years old. Founded in 1716, the church has been served by a long line of distinguished preachers, including Jonathan Edwards and Harry Emerson Fosdick. The present pastor prepared to take his place in this succession at Wooster College and Union Theological Seminary.

never irrelevant. But there were times when we did not know our need. We know it now. A famous Scottish theologian says that the question most often put to him today is not "Is the gospel true?" but rather "Is the gospel relevant?" Two thousand years of witness of the church universal is that it is relevant indeed. But it is relevant only in terms of that from which we seek to be saved. We turn now to the question, Saved from what?

Individual Salvation

First we must be saved from loss of a sense of personal worth. We need to be saved as individuals. Totalitarian systems are today giving us a collective meaning, but for this collective importance we have to sacrifice our individual soul. If we are not saved by Christ as individuals, we will be easy marks for those who would save us *en masse*. If we are not saved by personal choice and witness, we will be saved by external force. The world is full of nameless, lonely and defeated people seeking some kind of salvation. They are emotionally starved. For this reason they can be emotionally controlled. They have lost their individual significance and dignity.

Bishop Gerald Kennedy gives us the following illustration. At the time of Knute Rockne's death, President Hoover sent a eulogistic message to the press. This moved E. B. White to write:

> We see nothing wrong in the President's expressing grief over the loss of a beloved football coach, but from a diplomatic angle, it seems to leave out certain other deceased members of college faculties, men who worked with undergraduates in groups other than groups of eleven. In our unofficial capacity, therefore, we take this opportunity to express the nation's grief in the death of all the other upright members of college faculties who died during the past year. We are sorry we didn't know their names.

Christ Saves from Personal Extinction

Christ was born to seek and to save all nameless ones. This was what the slaves of the 1st century knew. This was why their eager questions to a neighbor were always, "Did you know that Christ was born for you? Did you know that Christ died for you?"

And this first century fellowship of redeemed individuals still exists. It exists in the living church. I never cease to be impressed by the Episcopalian form of communion service, where all men are called upon to leave the pews of their choice, among friends, in places of prominence, to come forward and kneel humbly side by side—named and nameless, artisan and banker, teacher and pupil, rich and poor—to receive the symbol of Christ himself, the bread and water of life. As they kneel the priest says, "Take, eat, remembering that Christ died for you!" Those who know this experience in all its meaning have a glimpse of what salvation from extinction means. "The eternal God is our refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms." This is what gives dignity to life. It is a sin to sacrifice this God-given dignity at worldly altars.

First, then, the Christ, born at Christmas, saves us from personal extinction. Second, this Christ who comes to us at Christmas delivers us from meaninglessness. From this gift of God, born a babe in a manger and walking the same road of life we walk and moving triumphantly on through death, we learn what the real values of life are. Someone has said that the world at present is like a great shop window where a practical joker has entered at night and changed all the price tags so that the valuable things are cheap and that which is of no value commands an overwhelming price. The God of love through Christ shows us what the values are. We are able through him to find truth and worth in simple things. Life is meaningless unless we know what is of value and what is not. This knowledge is made known to us as we one and all bow humbly before the manger to which the star of Bethlehem leads. God saves us at Christmas by replacing the correct price tags, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A Modern Christmas

In the light of this, consider an excerpt from one of our weekly news magazines, captioned, Christmas on 57th Street.

> Just in time for the thoughtful Christmas shopper, a Manhattan store last week staged a fashion show for dogs. Solemn, patient hounds, and other beasts of impeccable pedigree paraded the latest nonsense in trappings: an evening coat sprinkled with sequins, bankers grey herringbone coats for town, polo coats for the country. For delicate dogs there was a red rain coat and matching hood to be worn with waterproof leather boots. . . . Hats included an item bedecked with pussy willows, another with a long black plume. All of them were to be had on 57th Street East, a locality where New Yorkers who don't need anything, shop for things they didn't know they wanted! *Time*, Nov. 28, 1949.)

We are fond of calling the Communists atheistic materialists. And yet God in Christ is all that can save us from the same thing. This is the epitome of American materialism—"people who don't need anything shopping for things they didn't know they wanted," people complaining that some steel workers, striking for pension security, have slowed up their coupon-clipping so that it is hard to buy plumed hats and raincoats for their dogs! This may be only a symbol, but it is a telling one. Something is upside down. And not the might of communist power will set it right. Only the redeeming love of God born a babe in a manger can save us, can draw us out of ourselves so that we see our brother's need as our own. Remember Mary's song, the Magnificat, sung as she awaited the coming of her child. Luke records it:

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
He hath showed strength with his arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
And hath exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things.

We are saved from the wrath of God through the Babe of Bethlehem. Through him our spirits

are renewed and our minds transformed so that life's values are set right in light of the Kingdom of God. The call is to love and to service. We are delivered from the futility of life and set on a heavenly crusade. We are redeemed from meaninglessness through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The one who was born to save us delivers us from still another sin, from the "pride of having arrived," from what we might call "superficial contentment." This is perhaps the greatest deliverance of all from the subtlest sin of all. We know when we sell our individual souls and lose them to the mass mind. A guilty conscience warns us when our values become too far out of line. We rejoice when we can be delivered back into the image of God. We are glad when our consciences are cleared by seeing the right and doing it. But what of the sin of prideful contentment? If our spirits have found rest short of God, are we glad for the saving grace which rouses us from our soft couch of the average way and sends us off as pilgrims of the Master, speaking the truth and carrying crosses for him who was born to save us? Here again the Christchild delivers us by moving us out of the sterile world of prideful self-achievement into the pilgrim way. This is a disturbing Christ who comes. Will we want his salvation if we think we are already satisfied?

Christ Saves from Pride

W. H. Auden in his *Christmas Oratorio* pictures Herod as every man who is content with his lot, every man to whom Christ is disturbing. The poet has Herod say:

> Today, apparently, judging by the trio who came to see me this morning with an ecstatic grin on their scholarly faces, the job has been done. "God has been born," they cried, "We have seen him ourselves. The world is saved. Nothing else matters."
>
> One doesn't need to be much of a psychologist to realize that if this rumor is not stamped out now, in a few years it is capable of diseasing the whole empire, and one doesn't have to be a prophet to predict the consequences if it should.

And then being disturbed by the thought of one coming to save him, Herod adds:

> Why should he dislike me so? I've worked like a slave. Ask anyone you like. I read all official dispatches without skipping. I've taken elocution lessons. I've hardly ever taken bribes. How dare he allow me to decide? I've tried to be good. I brush my teeth every night. I haven't had sex for a month. I object. I'm a liberal. I want everyone to be happy. I wish I had never been born.*

And so the Savior of the world comes in Advent and Christmas to save us; to restore us to our own feet, no matter what our earthly station, that we may reflect the image of God that is within us. He comes to save us from meaninglessness and set our values right; he comes to shake us out of our complacency and launch us on the road to heaven. This is the salvation offered freely to those who would know him. "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people."

*Quoted by permission of Random House from *The Collected Poetry of W. H. Auden.*

Almighty and eternal God whose light doth shine in mortal darkness; reveal unto us thy presence in our souls, and thy judgment of our action, thought, and word. Manifest thyself to us in the moments of this present time. Open our eyes to the glory all around us. Thou art ever coming to thy children, coming in thy manifold ways; by our own serious concern may we prepare ourselves to know thee through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Pastoral Prayer

By Elmer S. Freeman

Staff Member, Commission on Evangelism and Devotional Life of the Congregational Christian Churches, Chicago, Illinois

Based on Solomon's prayer of dedication of the Temple (I Kings 8:23-66; II Chron. 6:36-7:3)

O LORD, there is no God like thee in the heavens above nor upon the earth beneath, who keepest covenant and showest kindness to thy servants who walk before thee with all their heart. Now therefore, O God, let thy word be confirmed, we pray thee, which thou hast spoken, and let our prayer be heard.

Behold, the heavens and the highest heaven cannot contain thee—how much less this house built by our hands! Yet incline unto our prayer and supplication, that thine eyes may be open toward this house day and night, even toward the place of which thou hast said, "My name shall be there." Hear thou in the heavens, thy dwelling place, and when thou hearest, forgive.

Whatever trouble may come upon us, O Lord, through our disobedience, through our selfishness, through our hardness of heart; whatever prayer, whatever supplication may be made in this place by any man or by all thy people, who knows each his own personal affliction, and stretches out his hand toward this house—then hear thou in the heavens, thy dwelling place, and forgive and act and render to each according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest (for thou, even thou alone, knowest the hearts of all the children of men), that we may reverence thee all the days we live.

If we sin against thee—for there is no man that sins not—and we turn again and make supplication to thee, saying, "We have sinned and have acted perversely and wickedly"; if we return to thee with all our mind and all our heart, then hear, O Lord, and forgive thy people, and grant us compassion in the sight of all our enemies. Let thine eyes be open and thine ears attentive to the prayer made in this place. Now therefore, O Lord God, let thy priests be clothed with salvation, and let thy people rejoice in prosperity according to our righteousness in thy sight. Turn not away the face of thine anointed; remember thy grace toward thy servants, for thou art good, and thy grace is everlasting. Amen.

A Child Is Born

By Rockwell C. Smith

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6.

ARE you prepared as a Christian to celebrate Christmas? Every celebration of Christmas save the proper religious one is a matter of solicitous interest and preparation for weeks if not months before the event. Commodity manufacturers are busy making Christmas merchandise months in advance of the day. Retail merchants devote November and December to their recognition of Christmas. Advertising and newspaper copy shriek out advice to all to do their Christmas shopping early. The post office puts up placards giving directions for the proper mailing of Christmas gifts. Individual men and women plan their finances ahead to meet the annual Christmas depletion.

And in this as in so many other practices the children of this world are wiser than the children of light. When we turn to our biblical accounts we find that God made his Christmas preparations early. The genealogy of Jesus which we find in Matthew's first 17 verses points to God's careful provision of the physical heritage of Jesus. It is not an adequate genealogy, we know. Luke gives us another with which this cannot be reconciled. They are both doubtless incomplete. All that is beside the point. What the genealogies point out so eloquently that he who runs may read is that Christmas was not an accident but was planned and purposed, the fruit of generations of cooperation between man and the will of God.

Spiritual Ancestry

Nor is this all nor most important. Back of that physical ancestry is a deeper spiritual ancestry. Christmas, which shines out to us as a spectacular moment, was really a gradual growth in the souls of men. More than 700 years before that first Christmas Eve Isaiah was singing: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." And Isaiah was but one of a great company looking forward to the day when that child should be born, only one of a great chorus singing the day of the Lord.

Nor is this all, this history of which we are conscious. Back of the Jewish physical ancestry of Christmas, back of the spiritual ideals from which the Christmas star took fire, back of the dimly lighted foreground of human development which our eyes can see and our minds know, there loom the great creative eons of God. What happened then we can at best know only dimly through the dulled mirror of scientific imagination. Out there in steaming space a fiery ball of sulphurous gases cooling, cooling. On this ball jellylike substances perpetuating in themselves similar qualities from generation to generation. Out of these dull lumps differentiations appearing, life climbing out of the slime to the newly formed hills; life taking on form and structure; dim mammoth shapes struggling with one another for a foothold on life; a slim wraithlike figure learning to stand up and to look up. What is all this? Where is it all going? Why, to Bethlehem to make the first Christmas!

God's Solicitude

When we pause thus to inquire, and to give to Christmas the cosmic setting out of which it grew and which we must see if we are to comprehend the meaning of the day, we become conscious of a depth of significance which had escaped us before. Christmas is the anniversary of the establishment of a unique relationship between men and God. And what a wealth of light it sheds upon the character of God, of men, and of the relationship which binds them together! Here is the meaning of man's outgoing faith and God's returning revelation at its highest and best. Here is God as he is and man as he ought to be.

The inescapable first impression that comes to us from this view of Christmas is of the infinite care and solicitude of God. "Unto us a child is born." What a world of care and preparation lie behind the words. Ages pay tribute to one little human breath. We cautious mortals have a saying, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket." How different, how boldly venturesome is the divine strategy. Evolving worlds, panoramic history, the rise of a great religious culture and a deeply religious people—all this the forerunner of a baby curled on a couch of hay. Here we see God striving to save a world, to lead men by the cord of their own freedom into a divine and eternal fellowship. Here the great and final task of the universe, the fulfillment of the divine person, is being attempted. And all entrusted to the fragile life of a little child.

Suppose for a moment that you had been God faced with the task of calling or recalling men to

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their divine end. What would have been your strategy? I fear we would borrow more from the technique of the sideshow barker and the advertising agency than from that of the farm, the seed and the soil. A big splash is our method of calling a world to repentance and divine fellowship. Even the prophets of Israel who felt most keenly the divine purpose fell into this human weakness. Almost without exception they paint the reign of the Lord in cataclysmic colors. Wind, earthquake, fire and death are the vehicles of God's redemptive love, according to their human understanding. Only in rare moments of understanding do they rise to this height: "Unto us a child is born."

Yet is not God's way the best way? Cataclysmic and complete successes are but the prelude to failure, confusion and chaos. Was the world ever more confident and self-assured than in 1914? Was business ever better, confidence ever higher, values ever more extravagant than in 1929? What of V-J Day so little time ago? Pride goeth before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction. Immediate success is always purchased at the price of ultimate failure. Life's great gains are its slow growths. "Unto us a child is born." Learn the strategy of God!

Whenever Christianity has waxed strong it has depended upon God's will and God's way. What we need in our churches is faith in God's care and the use of the principles of growth in instilling religion. Sunday school teacher, do not measure your success by the lesson or by the year. Measure your commerce with men for God by the generation. God works slowly but irresistibly, and he works. Unto us a child—not a brass band or an electric sign or an advertising agency—is born.

Ours Is a Salvaging God

And ours is not only a God who is infinitely solicitous, but a salvaging God. Ah, what a message is there for broken hearts and lives along the road. Our God stoops down to bind up the broken and to preserve and conserve what looks to be hopelessly lost. One cannot read Matthew's genealogy of Jesus with dry eyes if he reads with historic perspective and sympathy. How many broken and twisted lives rise to us through the lines. There walks Abraham, an old man torn from his home to wander the face of the earth, a childless man, facing death and the extinction of his name with only a will-o'-the-wisp promise to sustain him. There goes Jacob, estranged by greed from his brother and his native land. There walks David, and beside him the dark shadow of Uriah's wife to remind him of character forsaken and beauty brought low. And on and on, what a company of tears it is. Yet all are marching, with their pains, their sorrows, their sins, their disappointments, their despairs, their remorses and their vain regrets, marching to Bethlehem and to Christmas. Each tear and groan has had its full part through the redemptive mercy of God in making Christmas Day.

God salvages human life: that is the message of Christmas. It is the message already beginning to form on those baby lips which shall come to clear expression at Calvary: "Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit." We may fail but God goes on. No dream is ever lost, no honest effort ever dies. The dreamers have always won out. Who lost, Socrates or his executioners; Lincoln or John Wilkes Booth; Jesus Christ or Pontius Pilate? The commentary of history is that Jesus' accusers are only remembered for the man they succeeded in killing.

Nothing Good Is Lost

Nothing good is ever lost: say that again and again. God preserves the goods that go beyond our keeping. As God brings the wheat we sow in the ground to a startling and unbelievable immortality in the standing grain, so God brings our lost dreams to unexpected rebirth. All those who went before had possessed at their best moment mad Christmas dreams. They had sung with Isaiah, "Unto us a child is born." But succeeding ages had branded them liars and visionaries. Jerusalem was fallen, sacked, destroyed, God's people carried to a strange land. When they finally returned, it was only to a brief interlude of freedom broken forever by the Greek and Roman conquests. The hope of the world lay dormant and defeated in a mean and subject people patronized by Roman power and Greek wisdom. Even at home the dreams of an Isaiah were forgotten by a formulating and literalized priesthood. Judaism had fallen on barren days; its priests were without spirit or vision, "blind leaders of the blind." An honest man might well have laughed at the unheard singing of Israel's poets and have said, "Their dreams are as dead as their day." And all the while Christmas was dawning at Bethlehem.

Are your dreams disappointed? Nay, are they dead and have you forgotten them? Has the harsh brutality which we falsely call the real world dulled your senses to those visions which youth once inspired? Well, if you have forgotten, God has not forgotten. Youth's dream is still precious to him. The tragedy with most of us is that the best parts of us have been dead in us these many years. The shepherds were afraid when they heard the angel song. But the words came: "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings." Fear not, there are good tidings yet, dead dreams shall bloom and are blooming. We are marching forward blindly but surely toward Christmas.

Human Element in Christmas

But we must not let the splendor of God blind us to the necessary human elements in the equation that resulted in Christmas. God works through men, but only when men are obedient. God's will can be done on earth as it is in heaven only when we seek it and obey it. Christmas could come only when human obedience had made the way clear. Look to the list of those who went before Jesus. They were stupid men, they were avaricious men, they were doubting men, they were lust-driven men; but the light of the picture of their ongoing procession is the fact that they

could obey God. Not perfect obedience, mind you, because their understanding of God's will was imperfect and colored by selfishness. But they did obey what they thought to be God's will. Imperfectly they prophesied, in their own lives, the life of One who became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

One of the tragedies in the development of modern societies and individuals is the lack of any knowledge of what obedience means. This fact is to be witnessed on every hand. Many young people are rebelling against the rules of their parents. They complain about them as old fogies and fools. Yet these same young people, freed of parental restraint, prove themselves to be dishonorable and untrustworthy. They do not obey themselves or their promises any more than they obeyed their parents. They are rebelling not against parents but against obedience.

Our modern age is an age of experiment. Many people live on the basis of "try anything once." The only thing they never try is obedience—discipline. If you must experiment with anything, experiment with that. Try playing according to the rules for once. Is Christianity foolish and Christ a dreamer? Have you ever tried being Christian with all your heart, soul and mind? Have you ever given yourself to one Christian deed wholly and unreservedly? Christianity will be advanced in the next generations not by its critics but by those who obey the teachings of Christ. The first Christmas came through obedience. Christmas will really come back when we are obedient.

A Vicious Philosophy

There is abroad today a vicious philosophy which teaches that a thing is true and good if it works. To reduce this philosophy to its lowest terms is to operate on the principle of "what do I get out of this?" Millions of people, and some of them religious, find satisfaction in that philosophy today. Whatever cannot be made to yield immediate dividends is thrown aside. However effective this point of view may be in winning a material way, it is not the philosophy of Christmas. Christmas was built by men who asked, not Does it work? but Does God command it? How can we in our short span of years judge the final outcome of any action? Abraham could not see Bethlehem from Ur of the Chaldees, yet he set out to find Christmas. David grieving over the perfidy of Absalom could not fathom the will of God, yet he looked beyond his dead boy to Christmas. Even wise Isaiah, faithfully singing of the coming Christmas while the Assyrians hammered at the gates, never saw his dreams fulfilled but did see his nation fall. These men found Christmas only by faith; all they got out of all their hardships incurred through obedience to almighty God was a dream. But they held with firm loyalty to the dream, they were obedient unto death.

Brethren, can we do more? There may not be very much for you to look forward to from a Christian life so far as you can see, all the advantages and joys may seem to be in the alternatives just now. It may be that another wave of persecution will settle on the Christian church. But let us all, in memory of those tragic blind eyes peering through the darkness of the ages toward the first Christmas, set our eyes and faces toward Christmas again and forever. "For unto us a child is born."

Our children are waiting eagerly for Christmas. And in a quite different sense their parents will be waiting no less eagerly for Christmas, the Christmas of the spirit when Christ is born again in our hearts and in our relationships with others. But as a matter of fact we ought not to be waiting for that Christmas, for Christmas is waiting for us. The stores have been packed full of toys and other gifts to gladden the Christmas season. The merchants have prepared Christmas materially. It is waiting for us. And that is but a parable of our relationship to God. God's hands are full of gifts waiting to be showered upon us. He has prepared Christmas again. It is waiting for us.

All around us are men and women and a world blind to the Christmas star still shining, deaf to the angel song. Christmas and the spirit of Christ are waiting for a chance at their shabby lives; and men pass them by. Again the voice of God is calling: "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" Is there one who will arise to say: "Here am I, send me."

The Christmas chimes may ring, the Christmas star
  May dawn in burnished beauty in the skies,
  Mary may rock her boy with gentle sighs,
And wise men may make pilgrimage afar.

We loyal henchmen to the things that are
  Will never hear the chime or heed the gleam,
  Deftly will miss God's drama and God's dream
Incredibly unaware of all we mar.

The midnight hour is here—and, once again
  Shepherds are listening for the angel call—
  The telephone is ringing in the hall:
Aunt Martha says: "Remember Tommy's train."

  And we remember every separate thing,
  Except a star, a stable, and a King.

THE LAND IS BRIGHT

Arthur Hugh Clough, the Victorian poet, describes the kind of spirit we need for living in the coming year:

Say not the struggle nought availeth,
  The labor and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
  And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
  It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
  And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
  Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
  Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
  When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
  But westward, look, the land is bright.

By David Rhys Williams

How We Destroy the Thing We Love

OUR theme this morning is suggested by Oscar Wilde's well known poem, "The Ballad of Reading Gaol." In it the author describes the restlessness of a certain prisoner in the gaol who paces frantically back and forth in his cell, awaiting execution for the crime of murdering his wife. He is frantic not so much from fear of what is about to be done to him as from remorse for what he himself has already done to another. For, as the poem explains, "The man had killed the thing he loved." The poet goes on to observe:

> Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
> By each let this be heard.
> Some do it with a bitter look,
> Some with a flattering word,
> The coward does it with a kiss,
> The brave man with a sword.

Yes, deep down in the human heart there are strange wild destructive impulses to take the very life of that which we love most. So deep-lying are these impulses that they seldom come to consciousness, with the result that many of us go on destroying the thing we love without ever realizing what we are doing.

It was the terrible fate of that prisoner in Reading Gaol to know what he had done. In a fit of blind rage, he had killed the one person in all the world who had made life meaningful for him. And his heart was torn with the agony of grief and remorse.

King David of ancient Israel knew a similar agony. His favorite son was Absalom, the pride and joy of his life. And yet King David was responsible for that son's tragic end. It was not his own spear, to be sure, that pierced his son's heart —Joab, the chief of his armies, had done that. Yet when news of Absalom's fate was brought to the king, David fully realized that he himself was responsible, for he and he alone had set in motion the train of events which led directly to the death of his son. Instead of blaming others, David went up to his chamber and wept bitter tears, crying in his agony: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would that I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" The remorse of King David, as well as that of the prisoner in Reading Gaol, was immediate and overpowering, because in each case there was tangible evidence of the crime committed and the loss sustained.

Spiritual Homicide

But there are many ways of destroying the thing we love besides effecting its physical destruction. There is such a crime, for example, as spiritual homicide. It is precisely here in the realm of spiritual values that every one of us needs to be on guard against his own destructive tendencies.

Here is a man who marries the woman of his choice. What is the one quality in her which has attracted him above all others? It is her maternal nature. The instinct of tenderness in her is very strong. If she had not possessed this virtue, he would not have married her in the first place. Children are born, and these children in time require more and more of the mother's attention. The father begins to begrudge the amount of this attention. In various ways he sets out to change the character of his wife, by sarcastic remarks or angry altercations or silent neglect, until he has so transformed her natural tenderness into something hard and unyielding that he succeeds in destroying the quality in her which he cherishes most.

Here is a woman who marries the man of her choice. What is the one virtue in him which has attracted her above all others? It is his chivalrous manner, the gallant way in which he conducts himself in the presence of other people, his buoyant spirit and complete lack of self-consciousness. They marry; and then what does she do but proceed to criticize the very quality in him which had originally won her heart. Out of fear or other motive, she begrudges him the most harmless attentions to other men and women. She finds fault not with his vices so much as with his chief virtue. By her constant jealousy she makes him so self-conscious and so much on his guard that he becomes an entirely different personality. And then when it is too late, she becomes vaguely aware that something beautiful has gone out of her life —but not sufficiently aware to realize that she alone is largely responsible.

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Or again, here is a child who is the very life and joy of a parent. What is the one quality in this child which is most obvious and lovable? It is his natural honesty, his frank and open countenance, his instinctive reluctance either to tell or act a lie. But the parent doesn't realize that as his child advances in years, there is need for more and more privacy if honesty is to remain honest. The solicitous supervision that was once beneficial in infancy can become a tyrannical and destructive force as the child grows older. There are times when certain direct personal questions should not be asked of any child.

By an overweening curiosity to know everything that our children are doing or have done, we run grave peril of turning them into accomplished prevaricators. We tempt them to deceive us by begrudging them the privacy essential to their own spiritual growth and thus succeed in destroying in them that which we once prized so highly.

Friendships Easily Destroyed

And this is just as true of our friendships. By keeping too close a watch over our friends, by trailing their movements too minutely and asking questions which we have no right to ask, we often undermine the very trust that makes the relationship possible, and then lament our loss without even surmising our own share in bringing it about.

Yes, there are many ways in which we are prone to destroy the thing we love—the possessive attitude, the bitter look, the sarcastic repartee, the yawn of indifference, the rebuke of ridicule, the nagging spirit. How we sometimes wish we could go back to a certain period in our lives and start all over again with what we now know! How we wish we could reclaim values which once were ours but are now lost, perhaps forever!

In no sphere of life is there greater danger of destroying what we treasure than in the sphere of religion. Men have had a profound spiritual experience—some revelation of ethical insight, some mystical companionship with things eternal and unseen, and then have sought to preserve it for the inspiration of future generations in the form of rituals, creeds and ceremonies. That which the prophet and seer have discovered, the priest and ecclesiastic would organize and systematize. But in so doing they run a serious risk of losing the thing they would preserve. They do not seem to realize how the letter killeth, while it is the spirit that giveth life.

John Steinbeck in his revealing novel, *Of Mice and Men,* describes a half-wit who loves to stroke the soft fur of little animals. But he holds them so tight that he crushes out their life without realizing it, and then goes on to fondle them long after they are dead. Just so, it is possible for us to smother whatever vitality our religious faith may have by holding to its forms too rigidly, and then with little or no awareness we continue to fondle that from which the spirit has fled.

In conclusion, let me suggest the possibility of a similar peril to our nation. The one thing about her that we esteem above all else is her heritage of freedom. This we would ensure to our children and our children's children. But unless our methods of ensuring freedom are also freedom's methods, there is not only the grave but the almost certain risk of losing what we would ensure. Eternal vigilance is still the price of liberty, but it should be vigilant enough to avoid crushing liberty in the very process of defending it.

In all our approaches to life—whether toward friends and loved ones, toward our work, our country, or our religion—there are few of us who do not need to be on guard against unconscious impulses to destroy the very thing we treasure. And some of us need to be constantly on guard.

Let us pray.

O Thou who seest into the deep recesses of the human soul, help us to become truly acquainted with ourselves. Teach us to search our hearts for those hidden and disguised motives which impel us to betray our own best interest as well as that of others. Inspire us with a firm determination to fortify the virtues of our friends and loved ones, to undergird the best in them, not undermine it, and in all other endeavors to preserve that which we most highly cherish. For we would build up, not tear down, we would create and not destroy. Amen.

Sing, Sons of God

Tidings. 11.10.11.10 (with refrain)

SING, sons of God, of every race and nation.
Lift up new songs of world fraternity.
Sing songs of peace and pray for world salvation.
Know who is Truth, and Life and Liberty.

Glory to Jesus. Praise him and sing.
Light of the morning with healing on his wing.

Sing faith in him. Make him your sure physician
Whose saving health is for a world in pain.
Man, born to sing, must heed his great commission;
Then may all men lift up a grand refrain.

Glory to Jesus. Praise him and sing.
Light of the morning with healing on his wing.

Sing hope in him, an earnest expectation
For all the earth as in his realm above.
Good will and truth the quest of God's creation
Till life and joy are found in law and love.

Glory to Jesus. Praise him and sing.
Light of the morning with healing on his wing.

Sing love like him, eternal Lord and Brother.
The love of Christ from sin and strife sets free.
Let good o'ercome the evil in each other.
Hail, sons of God, his high humanity.

Glory to Jesus. Praise him and sing.
Light of the morning with healing on his wing.

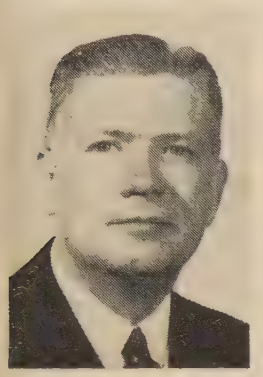
RAYMOND H. LAURY.

The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ

By Frederick Andrew Roblee

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Philippians 4:23.

THE phrase "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" recurs again and again in the New Testament. It is in most of the benedictions with which St. Paul closes his letters. What does it mean and what is its significance.



In the New Testament, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" signifies the help given by God through Christ which enables us, as Christians, more and more to overcome our sinful thoughts and actions and to live as children of our heavenly Father in the divine and eternal Kingdom. It is God's reaching down to help us in every aspect of our need, doing for us what we are unable to do for ourselves. It stands for the tremendous difference Christ has made and continues to make in our lives.

The Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the logical order in which to describe the God whom Christians know and worship, but it is not the actual order in which the Christian God becomes known and experienced in his fullness. In this, Christ comes first. People today need to appreciate more adequately the fact that Jesus radically changed men's thoughts concerning God and even more their awareness of God's nearness and transcendental importance to them.

Ideas of God Changed

Yes, Jesus radically changed men's ideas concerning God! Try to imagine, if you can, what it was like to worship as did an ancient Greek or Roman. We like to read mythology, but how would we like that for our religion? How would we like emperor worship? Some of the great philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, had exalted ideas of God, but even this best was far short of the God Christians know and worship. In your imagination, stand with Paul on Mar's Hill and see!

In the Jewish heritage of experience and faith men came much closer to the Christian conception of God, yet even here the coming of Jesus made a profound difference. Of course the Jews believed in the fatherhood of God, but this very great and central truth too often was lost in a legalistic moral code and in prescribed rituals performed in the temple of Jerusalem. Many believed that Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship. The great prophets had had a far more worthy conception of the worship of God than this, but their teachings had become obscure. In your imagination, return to the 1st century and journey with the Passover pilgrims of Jerusalem and try to worship with them through animal sacrifice! Jesus stood in the line of the prophets, but he went far beyond them in clarifying and ennobling men's thoughts concerning God. Modern Judaism, like all the world's other great religions, owes much to the influence of Jesus.

Even more important, however, than the improvement in the conception of God was the vivid awareness of the divine Presence which the Master brought to men. He spoke about God with such intense realism that men sought to have from him the secrets of communion with God. Indeed they came to think of the God about whom Jesus spoke as the true God whom men had hardly known before at all. They spoke with new awe and reverence of "God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" refers to all this—the great difference which the coming of Jesus made.

Jesus Still Changes Men's Ideas

Then let us also see that "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" refers to the difference which he continues to make. As Harry Emerson Fosdick points out in his fine book, *A Guide to Understanding the Bible,* "The God of the early Christians was not so much the deity Jesus taught as the deity they believed him to be." The first Christians worshiped Christ, and they kept on worshiping him. They felt his nearness and his transforming power.

Now it is not possible to distinguish between the Christian's experience of God and the Christian's experience of Christ. This is why we must say that God, Christ and the Holy Spirit are one God, not only in logic but also in Christian worship. Nevertheless there is reality and great significance in the Christ of experience. Just as in the days of his flesh when he brought God close, so now as we read our New Testaments he steps out of those pages, answering the depths of our human need with the depths of his truth and love, and brings God close. For this reason, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" is not only a great and glorious historic fact, it also is a present and living fact which each one of us may know and needs desperately to know. There is no more wonderful story than that of how the Christ of experience

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comes to men and women with transforming power. He came to St. Paul, St. Augustine, Wesley, Kagawa, and to countless others—and has come or may come to each one of us!

The first Christians felt that Jesus saved them from their sins. He made clear their relationship with God. He bore their sin in his own person. He gave those who with sincere repentance turned to God assurance of divine forgiveness and new life. But all this is not merely in the past. We may believe, indeed we must believe, that he still saves us. He is the living Savior, stepping out of the past and answering the very depths of our need with the depths of his love. There is great truth for every Christian in the old gospel hymn:

I've found a Friend, oh, such a Friend!
He loved me ere I knew him;
He drew me with the cords of love,
And thus he bound me to him.
And round my heart still closely twine
Those ties which naught can sever,
For I am his, and he is mine,
Forever and forever.

Yes, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," refers not only to the great difference his coming made to mankind but also to the difference which he continues to make here and now for each one of us.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." Amen.

HOW MUCH IS YOUR NAME WORTH?

A Sermon for Children by William Schorman

I READ the other day of a name that was worth over a million dollars!* The name was "Sunkist," and maybe you have seen that name printed on oranges. Orange growers in California have used that name for years. However, some other men were using that name for raisins, prunes and other dried fruit, and the orange growers said to one another: "We should have that name just for our oranges so that when people hear the word 'Sunkist' they will know that it means only one thing—oranges. We could put ads in papers telling people to buy Sunkist oranges, for they are sweet and juicy."

And so the orange growers went to men raising prunes and raisins and asked them, "How much do you want for your name, 'Sunkist'? We want to buy it from you."

"Well, how much is it worth to you?"

After a great deal of bargaining, the orange growers finally paid one million, two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the name. Think of it, all that money just for a name! If you had that much money in dollar bills and you put one dollar bill next to another, why, you would have enough money to stretch 109 miles.

All of us are making names for ourselves, either good names or bad names, and the Bible has something to say about this, for the Bible says, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches" (Prov. 22:1), or, "It is better to have a good name than a lot of money."

How much is your name worth?

**Business Week*, Sept. 30, 1950.

Pulpit Post

Advisory Ballot Comments

SIR: Remove "Pulpit Patter" by Morton S. Enslin! Criticism is perfectly valid but . . . [I] resent a constant irritant. Month after month he seems to delight in picking out some picayune fault and magnifying it beyond all reason. He's so smug and self-satisfied. The Pulpit I cherish most is the issue in which a reader called him the greatest "downtown coach" in the game.

Faith Lutheran, Arlington, Va. — RALPH B. PIPER.

SIR: The lead articles in the new Pulpit, as a group, have been good. Some issues have, however, been disappointing because they have contained no articles on the art of preaching. Whenever an issue contains an article like Luchs' "People Your Sermons," you are doing us a greater service than providing sermons which men can adapt for their own ends without too much effort.

Some of your readers take The Pulpit because they want a sermon for next Sunday. And some of us, I hope a majority, take The Pulpit because we want to become better craftsmen by studying the best efforts of our fellow ministers and by being reminded what are the finest techniques of sermon study, writing and construction. We want articles where an outstanding craftsman discusses his theories and methods. We want articles that deal with specific problems such as introductions, transitions, conclusions, types of outlines. We want articles which enable us to see in ever new ways the work of the preaching pastor.

Falcon Heights Congregational, St. Paul, Minn. — JAMES C. TRIMBLE.

SIR: The Pulpit not only helps; it challenges. Thanks for a fine publication.

Merrill, Wis. — J. F. SCHILLING.

SIR: I thoroughly enjoy everything in your excellent publication.

Los Angeles, Calif. — WILLIAM I. NEWMAN.

SIR: The new Pulpit is a 100 per cent improvement over the old Pulpit.

Community Methodist, Fort Hancock, Tex. — DONALD SIMMS, JR.

SIR: Of course I am going to continue to subscribe to The Pulpit. But please, please, stop filling the closing pages with various and sundry kinds of "patter" that takes

up valuable space! What we want is sermons, and more of them; long, short, in-between. The Pulpit Paragraphs are very valuable, too; so also are children's sermons. We have too many "highbrow" preachers' magazines already. The glory of the old Pulpit was that it contained mostly sermons, many of them.

Presbyterian Church, RALPH V. GILBERT.
Fremont, Neb.

SIR: Sift the illustrations a little more—many are overworked, others trite. How many times have you printed the natives who stopped on the safari to "wait until their souls caught up" (p. 27, Oct. 1951)? Last year, becoming a little griped at your use of the "story" of Dürer's "Praying Hands," I wrote the contributor as to his source. In a one-sentence reply he stated that he didn't know but had merely heard it and forgotten the source. It is my understanding that this touching story has no basis, but is sustained only by ministers in need of sentiment and a fine story. As a child I used to be skeptical of the personal illustrations used by the visiting evangelists; today I am leery of many personal illustrations used by big preachers.

Robbins, Tenn. WILLIAM R. SCHORMAN.

SIR: I would not mind going back to the old Pulpit, provided you kept Enslin, the book page and Pulpit Post. Enslin is most refreshing. Give us more sermons of the type of Gaston Foote's. They were excellent!

Waterdown United, JOHN B. MOORE.
Waterdown, Ont.

Not Worth the Price

SIR: Do not renew my subscription. After that cynical drivel by H. Lincoln MacKenzie ("Sounding Brass and Tinkling Cymbal") in the September Pulpit, the magazine is not worth it.

Emporia, Kan. P. L. CARPENTER.

More about MacKenzie

SIR: "Sounding Brass and Tinkling Cymbal," by H. Lincoln MacKenzie, to my thinking strangles the truth in defending it against exaggerations. True, one cannot discover that "God is love" through an honest survey of nature, for there selfishness rules, cruelty abounds, indifference to moral values prevails, while the beautiful is ever perishing. But that love has developed in just such a world, that it continually gains in influence, that some lives are so filled here and now with love and self-sacrificing good will that love may be called the dominant attitude, seems to demand some explanation. And no other explanation seems adequate than this one, "God is love."

The disunity of Protestant denominations is advanced as proof against the claim that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." But what about the strong trend toward reconciliation and cooperation evident during the past 50 years among the major denominations? That also calls for an explanation, especially since divisive issues are multiplying in our world. Perhaps God is still at work.

Does not the fact that men and women of today actually come to share in the victorious, undefeatable spirit of Jesus prove anything? What of those who actually smile in the face of disaster and make steppingstones out of defeat; who care intensely, but do not worry; who in a world of insecurity rest secure in a happy faith in God? Are such unknown to Brother MacKenzie? It seems incredible.

Methodist Church, J. BIRK JOHNSON.
Merrimac, Wis.

SIR: And so I read "Sounding Brass and Tinkling Cymbal" by H. L. MacKenzie (September Pulpit) and find that "tremendous dividends in moral recovery" may be had by reading "books by men like Thomas Aquinas and A. E. Taylor."

I once heard of a preacher who was going to preach a series of sermons on "How to Keep from Having a Nervous Breakdown." The series came to an abrupt end when the preacher himself became the victim of a nervous breakdown! Did that happen to Mr. MacKenzie? After criticizing ministers who are guilty of "exaggeration" and "flagrant dishonesty" he concludes with a neat little solution in one sweeping assertion. It is safe to say that men have been reading Aquinas and Taylor and yet have not witnessed "tremendous dividends in moral recovery."

Methodist Church, DONALD BARNES.
Lapel, Ind.

'Wholly Atheistic'

SIR: I was shocked by the leading article in your September issue ("Sounding Brass and Tinkling Cymbal," by H. Lincoln MacKenzie). It showed little comprehension of the meaning and aim of Christianity and was wholly atheistic.

Clearwater, Kan. H. V. CLARK.

Now We Know

SIR: If the testimony brought forward by contenders does not agree, it is held by common consent that "both can't be right." If a third party sounds his blast in the controversy, though he may agree in part with one or the other, it is altogether possible that all three may be wrong. In the June issue, Gaston Foote declares that Lloyd C. Douglas' first novel was *One Increasing Purpose*. In the September issue Howard Stone Anderson attempts to correct Gaston Foote and declares that his first novel was not *One Increasing Purpose* but *Magnificent Obsession*. In the October issue James B. Douglas, instead of correcting Howard Stone Anderson, perpetuates unwittingly Anderson's error and even urges The Pulpit to "tell him [Foote] that Lloyd C. Douglas' first novel was not *One Increasing Purpose* but *Magnificent Obsession*.

Before Gaston and the whole company of Pulpit readers become completely confused about the matter, which would be a ghastly comedy of errors, it may be well to set the record straight once and for all. The first novel of Douglas was not *Magnificent Obsession*, which was published in 1929, but *Wanted—A Congregation*, which was published in 1920.

Emanuel E. & R., KARL H. A. REST.
Manchester, Mich.
[He's right!—THE EDITORS.]

Miles Away from Average Church

SIR: Columnist Emurian is miles away from the average church and choir. He will make a major contribution to those who need help if he will get down to the average church (200 to 400 members) and talk about the selection of appropriate hymns for the different aspects of the worship service, how to get voluntary choir participation, how to develop a desirable type of choir director, organist and other leaders of the church's music program.

Dardanelle, Ark. RAY L. MCLESTER.

Re Denominational Issues

SIR: My search is for the quality of the sermon rather than the individual who wrote it. If denominational issues help to produce sermons of higher quality, I am for them.

The question may be raised, Will popularity rather than intrinsic worth be a determining factor in denominational issues, or is popularity synonymous with ability? To me it seems that the final evaluation must come from other sources—the editors.

There is a big "if" in my reply which, *if* it should lean either way, would lean in opposition.

Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran, VICTOR E. BECK.
New York.

SIR: I enjoyed your special Methodist issue (August). I was particularly impressed with John C. Irwin's estimate of Methodist preaching. For one thing, he places the general level of preaching high. Again, he credits the rural preacher with ability. He wrote: "One can go today into almost any county seat town and hear able preaching." Why not? Perhaps we need to revise our estimate of "important appointments."

Bethesda Methodist, D. W. CHARLTON.
Orrum, N. C.

The Other Fellow's Work Week

By Kenneth S. Jones

HAVE you ever wondered how your brother minister in the adjacent parish spends his time? Or, for that matter, have you ever figured out how the hours get away from you in this many-sided business of caring for a congregation?

Students in Prof. David A. MacLennan's class on the care of the parish at Yale Divinity School recently completed a survey which sheds some light on these questions. Questionnaires dealing with work habits were sent to 300 "successful" ministers. To qualify as "successful," a minister did need not to have had a large church (although most of those responding did), but needed only to be generally regarded by parishioners and fellow ministers as one performing a vital ministry. If his church was growing noticeably, or if the minister was active in significant community affairs, he might have been judged "successful" by one of the students.

The tabulated results of the survey reveal no hitherto unknown facts about the parish ministry, but they do set in a new light the relation between work habits and measurable results. The ministers queried are serving churches whose average membership is 700 and whose Sunday morning congregation averages 345. In the past five years, these ministers have received into church membership an average of 337 persons.

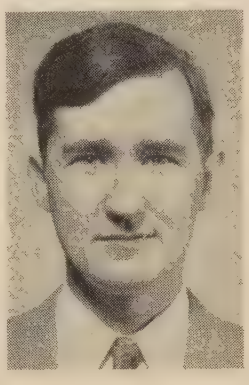
In response to the question "How many hours do you spend each week in the following . . . ?" these average hours were reported:

In sermon preparation	12 hours
In reading for growth	9½ hours
In community concerns	4½ hours
In meeting with church officials	4½ hours
In counseling by appointment	4½ hours
In personal or family recreation	5 hours
In attention to correspondence	5 hours

Since the length of a pastoral call varies with the individual and with the circumstances, the number of hours involved in visitation was not asked, but rather the number of calls completed in the average week. The ministers responding averaged 34 calls weekly. Of these, an average of 13 were calls upon the sick, and 8 calls upon prospective members.

Some unsolicited comments relative to these hours and functions seem worth quoting.

One minister observed: "Rural people want to be counseled, but not by appointment. They want to be informal about it. They watch for their minister in the grocery store or on the street. This is also pastoral visitation equal to a home visit for them." Another opined that office routine—checking records, getting out church letters, preparing the bulletin, etc.—takes the biggest block of time. A member of one of the connectional denominations said that meetings for ministers and denominational committees "use up some of our best hours, and are mostly a waste of time."



Time Spent in Preparation

The statistics on sermon preparation take several interesting turns. While the national average was 12 hours of preparation, ministers in the northeastern states spend only 10 hours in preparation as compared to the 15 hours devoted to this matter by midwestern ministers.

Without exception, the men who spend the most hours in sermon preparation also have the largest churches. Those who spend more than 20 hours in sermon preparation are serving churches whose memberships exceed 1,000, and each Sunday they preach to more than 700 people. The sermons that required 15 hours of preparation are heard by somewhat less than half of an average church membership of 800; those requiring less than 10 hours are heard by only one-third of congregations averaging 600 members.

It should be recalled here that the ministers who responded to the survey were mostly men of considerable repute. Forgetting this, one would get the impression that 200 persons will regularly come to hear a poorly prepared sermon. Even the poorest preachers among those queried are outstanding in one or more of the other ministerial qualifications. One valid conclusion that can be drawn from these figures is that carefully prepared sermons bring out a higher percentage of the church members.

One other statistic relative to sermon preparation is worthy of note. The ministers who preach to congregations that equal 70 per cent or more of their total church membership, spend, in no instance, less than 16½ hours in preparation. One veteran preacher commented: "After 54 years in the ministry, I feel the importance and necessity of exceptional pulpit work. I would advise new preachers to give all possible attention to sermon preparation, concerning matter and manner."

The men who spend the most time in sermon preparation also spend the most time in reading for growth. And, surprisingly enough, the fellows who knock out a sermon in 5 hours spend correspondingly little time in reading. The writers of these "quickie" sermons spend more time than all the others in attention to correspondence.

The questionnaire also inquired about hobbies. Sports and fishing were way out in front in popularity, with photography, gardening, reading and parsonage improvement receiving equal acclaim. Seventeen per cent of those responding confessed that they had no regularly pursued hobby. This lack of a hobby seems to have a curious relationship to the size of the Sunday morning congregation—or is it curious in view of the maxim "All work and no play . . . ?" Men without hobbies preach to a congregation that equals 34 per cent of their membership, while those who find time for systematic diversion also find 49 per cent of their people in the pews on Sunday morning.

Using Notes

Something of the preaching habits of popular preachers is revealed in the answers to questions about pulpit notes. Fifty-five per cent preach from outlines, 19 per cent from a manuscript, 15 per cent from notes, and 11 per cent without any notes whatever. Most men are emphatic about the advantages of the system they use; witness these comments: "I memorize what I want to say and use the outline to keep me within limits." "The thinking should be done before one enters the pulpit. That's why I use a manuscript." "A manuscript is too formal and confining, something like a strait-jacket."

Thirty per cent of the ministers teach a church school class. Eighty-six per cent of them attend youth group meetings regularly, and only 3 per cent not at all. Fifty-three per cent of the ministers' wives shoulder a major responsibility in church organizations, the most frequent posi-

(Continued on page 23)

KENNETH SHEFFIELD JONES is pastor of St. Luke's Methodist Church of Woodlawn, Baltimore, Md. He is a recent graduate of Yale Divinity School, where the facts contained in this article were collected by him and other students in Prof. MacLennan's classes.

A Year-End Check List of Some Harper Books for Ministers

QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

by Robert J. McCracken

A first book from the minister of famed Riverside Church, New York. Dr. McCracken's messages are both personal and profound and come in response to many questions put to him by troubled Christians he has met at Riverside and elsewhere over the country. An easily read book of real inspiration. **$2.50**

THE LIFE WE PRIZE

by Elton Trueblood

"In addition to being enormously clarifying for our own thought, this book leads the preaching minister onto many highways that will be followed in his preaching during the months to come." — ROBERT E. LUCCOCK in *Pulpit Digest* **$2.50**

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

by Ernest Fremont Tittle

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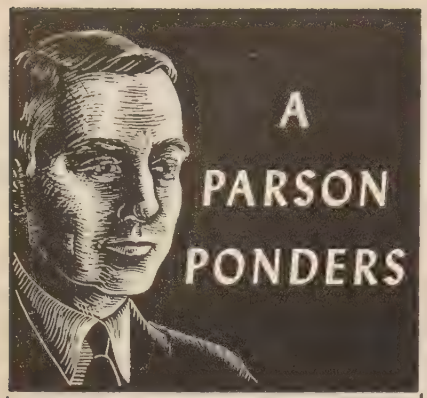

"The Vogue of the Vague" never ceases to cause wonder. That which cannot be understood acquires, for some, a special virtue. George Ades' fable comes to mind in which he tells of a minister who felt he needed a larger salary. So he preached a sermon replete with unintelligible words. Immediately an awed congregation raised his stipend.

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Pulpit Patter

By Morton S. Enslin

'A Truce to Question Marks'

SOME of my clerical friends appear to find a particular satisfaction in analyzing themselves, in trying to discover what makes them tick and letting others share in that fascinating discovery. Perhaps unbeknownst to myself I have that tendency too. I hasten to insert this sentence solely to be on the safe side, for again and again my wife placidly assures me that some quality which I have just heatedly disavowed is one of my most marked characteristics. I am quite aware of numerous likes and dislikes; I have never bothered to try to find out why they are what they are—that they are is quite enough for me.

One of them is that I am a very low churchman. I like decency and decorum in the service, dislike almost equally ranting from the pulpit and amen-shouting from the pews, hate to see a preacher read the scripture lesson from a pocket Bible, and much prefer to be decently and decorously clad in a gown when I preach myself. I could add a few more details as to likes and dislikes, but I fancy that these are enough to enable experts in the fine art of counseling among Pulpit readers to draw up a quite complete diagnosis and to find the answer to certain questions which may have bothered them—if I may flatter myself enough to think that this column ever bothers anyone.

Yes, I am definitely low church, especially in my attitude to the clergy. Twice I have used these words, "clergy" and "clerical"; each time with a bit of reluctance, for it is right there that my prejudice starts. I am very dubious about the propriety of making the gulf so deep between clergy and laiety. For myself I want none of it. That by ordination (my own was a very lovely experience of gracious welcome from elder brethren which I shall never forget and which I covet for my younger brethren now at the start of the road) I was made any different from what I had been ten minutes before I seriously doubt.

Thus I have never had the inclination to reverse my collar, have "Reverend" on my calling cards, or even raise my hand when pronouncing a benediction. In fact, in these latter years I always make the benediction embrace "us" instead of "you," for the few times that I did the reverse aroused later uneasy queries in my mind. And one last word before the next paragraph. I am always a bit disconcerted when, as sometimes happens, I find it expected that in the conduct of the service I turn my back on the congregation. Rightly or wrongly, sensibly or absurdly, this particular performance seems to me to tend to turn a minister into a priest. And I do not like the transformation.

Now having said all that, I hasten to the tiny point which prompted this long-winded preamble. It is possible for a preacher to be a bit too folksy in the pulpit for my taste. I have long rebelled at a mannerism which appears to me to be becoming particularly common nowadays. I refer to that most inane and insipid query which so many ministers seem to love to utter, "Shall we pray?" To some it may seem a very democratic and intimate way of wooing the congregation to the great spiritual adventure ahead. It woos me not at all. When that query comes gurgling from the pulpit—and so far as my observation has extended, anyone who makes use of that query always does it in a soft and hesitating tone, as if to say, "Oh please, folks, don't say No; I really want to"—my prompt response (inaudible so far, I hasten to assert) is, "I see no reason for it whatever." And this not because I am either irreverent or unwilling to join in a moment of prayer; it is simply that the query seems so insincere and silly.

Where is there a ground for question? The preacher is going to pray, whether we will or not. Everyone knows that. If any spoken prelude is necessary, certainly a straightforward one like "Let us pray" is far more proper. I have no slightest objection to "Let us bow in prayer," although in a good many churches one has to be an optimist or an allegorist to expect any assent. But even so, in heaven's name, may we be spared from that version of the opening injunction which some of our more streamlined spiritual leaders are finding so enticing: "Let us bow our hearts in prayer!" It is both awkward and Catholic to bow your knees; it makes you conspicuous to bow your head; but you can bow your heart with no trouble at all. No one need know anything about it. Perhaps some may feel that this injunction to "bow the heart" is tony without being Romish, elegant without being exacting. To me it is

unadulterated bunk, and I dislike it.

But to revert to the callow query: I have heard from time to time, and always with the same annoyance, the sister query, "Shall we join in singing hymn number 375?" As yet I have not heard the pay-off, "Shall we now listen attentively to my sermon?" If and when I hear that, I know I shall exclaim, "Indeed, No," and hasten to the door.

Work Week

(Continued from page 20)

tion being that of worship chairman of the women's society.

Finally, the questionnaire asked each minister to rate, according to his own evaluation, the relative importance of preaching, administrative leadership, visiting, counseling, and living example. Statistically they lined up like this: First, living example—by 2 to 1 over preaching, 4 to 1 over administrative leadership. Second, preaching—by 2 to 1 over counseling. Third, visiting—midway between preaching and administration. Fourth, counseling—just a bit ahead of administration. Fifth, administrative leadership.

One comment was particularly pointed. "The church's estimate is (so far as material rewards are concerned), Preaching No. 1, Administrative Leadership No. 2. But history reveals that great preachers have built large congregations, while great pastors have built large churches which survive the death or removal of the pastor."

Denominational representation of those included in the tabulation is as follows: Methodist, 52 per cent; Presbyterian, U. S., 10 per cent; Presbyterian, U.S.A., 9 per cent; Congregational Christian, 10 per cent; Evangelical United Brethren, 4 per cent; Protestant Episcopal, 4 per cent; Community, 2 per cent; Baptist, 2 per cent; all others, 7 per cent. The heavy Methodist return is probably due to the preponderance of Methodist students enrolled in the Yale Divinity School. They comprise one-third of the school's enrollment.

The lesson to be derived from the survey may be deduced from the returned questionnaire of one urban minister in New Jersey. He spends 3 hours in sermon preparation each week, 20 minutes in meetings with church officials, makes pastoral calls "when opportunity presents," spends 14 hours each week reading, reports that he has four hobbies, and his Sunday morning congregation is equal to 14 per cent of his church membership. No wonder!

Ethics

In some churches more formal
It's considered abnormal
To stray from the ritual decreed.
But to bomb a whole city,
(If it's done with great pity)
Is a moral and spiritual need.

GRAHAM R. HODGES.

• *A Tragic Message*

I THINK one of the most tragic phone calls ever made was one that I overheard here in our chapel a few months ago. I don't know the names of the individuals involved, and I'm glad I don't, but somewhere on this post is a mother who I believe committed a grievous sin against her child.

It was after Sunday school and I was in my office before entering the pulpit for the morning service. A little girl about ten years old was using the telephone. She was calling her mother and literally pleading for permission to stay for the church service, and from the receiver I could hear these words, "You come home right now or *you'll really get it!*" That particular service might not have been particularly helpful to that little girl, but the continued squelching of the desire to attend the public worship services is not going to strengthen the faith and character and habits of that child as the trying years of adolescence and maturity roll by.—*Herman J. Kregel, Post Chaplain, U. S. Military Academy, West Point, N. Y.*

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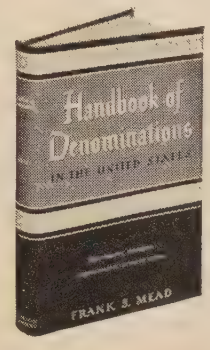

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Pulpit Paragraphs

Contributed by Readers of The Pulpit

• *'Heartbreak Hill'*

WE have lately been reading about "Heartbreak Hill" in Korea—so called because of the high number of casualties our Allied troops have sustained there and also because the victory has switched back and forth so often.

Our world is a Heartbreak Hill. The battle between Christ and the Adversary keeps seesawing back and forth, and under the enemy mortar-fire of secularism, indifference and half-way Christianity our casualties too have been high—too high.

These are not days for a limping Christianity. The victory is swinging nervously like the balances of an unsettled scale. Only one thing can weigh down the balance of victory for Chrst—the wholehearted allegiance of all Christians to their Lord and to his church. Our orders from Christ are clear: We must change Heartbreak Hill to Mount Zion!—*Howard W. Walenta, St. Peter's E. & R., DuBois, Pa.*

• *Music Has Power*

MUSIC is a means of creating power within our lives. As we join in the singing of great hymns or listen to the choir, the music itself has the power to change our mood. Carl Sandburg, in one of his books, related the personal experience of music becoming power in his life. He wrote, "I saw the whole world as a grinning skull and crossbones." Then he went to a concert by Mischa Elman. As for two hours he listened to Elman play, his soul was renewed and he came away exalted. He tells us: "I walked down the old streets of Chicago and that which was drab before seemed filled with a newness of life, and in the exaltation of music I looked up at the night and I said to myself, 'God, there's music in this world. Make thy music sing through me.' "—*Frank A. Court, St. Paul Methodist, Lincoln, Neb.*

• *Something Wants to Happen*

IN the Christian faith something is always about to happen. At the present moment the world is in sore need of something happening, but what we should consider chiefly is the fact that something wants to happen. Christ wants to fan the sparks of old loyalties in men's hearts into flame. There are some 800 million men and women and young people in the world who claim to belong to him, who at some time have had love for him and faith in him stirred in their hearts. Eight hundred million! They are potentially a colossal world Christian revolution. When the fires of a genuine Christian devotion blaze in them again, something will happen.

Christ wants these rekindled, remolded men and women to live his life at the burning points of human relations. I have an idea he wants men who are first of all committed unreservedly to him to be at the key positions in business and industry, in labor, in labor-management relations, in secretarial positions, in trade unions, in schools and universities—men who will dare to stand at those points together and insist that nothing less than the way of Christ be taken, men who would die before taking any other way. He wants men to go into politics and diplomacy who are first of all Christ's men and are at the same time the smartest and wisest and best men those positions have ever had, men who would die before stopping short of Christ's way in all their responsibilities. He wants the people in your block and your P.-T.A. and your shop and your club to people who in all the relationships of the community will insist on Christ's way—his love, his selflessness, his truth. And all this, in a flood across the world, wants to happen.

The trouble is that we stand in the way. Sometimes the very persons through whom Christ works are the ones who most effectively block the way. What we need is so to reorder our lives that the power of God will flow through them into the stream of the world's life. If, in our own personal recommitment to Christ and with a sense of inescapable urgency, we do reorder our lives, something will happen.

Then there can be a sweep of redemptive power through our civilization such as the world has never yet seen. More and more lives can be claimed for Christ, touched by him, and changed. The society in which we live can be transformed.

Something wants to happen. If ever in the history of the world any people had the responsibility for letting it happen, it rests on you and me now. Dare we stand in the way?—*W. Sherman Skinner, East Liberty Presbyterian, Pittsburgh, Pa.*

Pulpit Calendar

Nov. 1—All Saints Day.
Nov. 2—All Souls Day; World Community Day (Sponsored by the United Church Women).
Nov. 4—Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost.
Nov. 11—Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost; Armistice Day; Men and Missions Sunday.
Nov. 18—Twenty-seventh Sunday after Pentecost.
Nov. 25—Twenty-eighth Sunday after Pentecost; Stewardship Day.
Dec. 2—Advent Sunday.
Dec. 9—Second Sunday in Advent; Universal Bible Sunday.
Dec. 16—Third Sunday in Advent.
Dec. 23—Sunday before Christmas.
Dec. 24—Christmas Eve; Hanukah (Jewish).
Dec. 25—Christmas.
Dec. 30—Sunday after Christmas.
Dec. 31—New Year's Eve (Watch Night).
Jan. 1—New Year's Day; Festival of the Christening.
Jan. 5—Twelfth Night; Epiphany Eve.
Jan. 6—Epiphany.
Jan. 7—First Sunday after Epiphany.
Jan. 14—Second Sunday after Epiphany.
Jan. 21—Third Sundy after Epiphany.
Jan. 28—Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

SEASONS: Kingdomtide, Advent Christmastide, and Epiphany.

ALTAR COLORS: Kingdomtide, green; All Saints Day, white; Advent through Christmas Eve, violet; Christmas through the Octave of Epiphany, white.

(Pulpit Calendar lists dates in the calendar of the Christian year and other observances of nationwide or denominational significance.)

• *Enhancing the New Year*

A NEW year is another slice of life. A complete slice. Therefore it will have some tribulation in it—in the form of unharnessed energy, raw products, problems. But being made in the image of God, we have the power to overcome the world of tribulation by taking the raw products of life and creating something which not only will improve the order and beauty of life, but will also enhance our own dignity and happiness.—*Virgil A. Kraft, Methodist Chaplain at the University of Chicago.*

• *Pointed in the Right Direction*

RECENTLY our young son received a jigsaw puzzle for his birthday. It consisted of only four parts, but that was enough for him. He moved them here, he moved them there, but with little success in solving the puzzle. It became evident though that if we handed him the four pieces pointed in the right direction he could put them together.

That is a picture of those who struggle with real desire to do God's will. We reason about a puzzling situation to find his will, we talk with friends of Christian vision and insight, we consult the Bible. Then in the midst of our human struggling we turn in

worship. God takes the parts of the puzzle and gives them to us pointed in the right direction. We take them and solve the puzzle, some of us gleeful that we were so smart, others of us thankful to God that he should so shepherd our souls.—*Warren A. Nyberg, Emmanuel Methodist, Montevideo, Uruguay.*

• *The Rock of Ages*

ON the Canadian side, immediately above the Horseshoe falls of the Niagara river, there are remnants of a ship wrecked some decades ago. It had broken away from the tugboat and stranded on a rock. The two men who were the crew were saved next day. But their hair had turned white. One wonders what these men thought through the long night of terror in the thunder of the falls, as they faced a death that seemed sure and soon. The imagination shudders in picturing the demonic scene.

But was their situation very different from what which encompasses every living soul? Is not life like a ship without a rudder, drifting with growing speed toward the great falls of death? True insight reveals to every living soul the certainty of death; "and after death, there cometh judgment." Can one day, carelessly passed, be brought back for reliving, for perfect living before the God of life?—*Max Tratz, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Langenau, Bavaria.*

• *'Does Jesus Live Here?'*

BACK in the horse-and-buggy days there lived a preacher who was regarded by some of his friends and parishioners as a bit eccentric at times. One day as he was riding through the country he stopped his horse in front of a farmhouse, got out of the buggy and knocked at the door. The lady of the house came to the door and the preacher asked her, "Does Jesus live here?"

Needless to say, this query flabbergasted the farmer's wife not a little, and as soon as the preacher hit the road again she took off for the potato patch where her husband was working. When she had finished telling him about it the farmer said, "Of course you told him we go to the church down the road and are among the best contributors."

"No," said his wife. "He didn't ask that. He asked, 'Does Jesus live here?' "—*Herman J. Kregel, Post Chaplain, U. S. Military Academy, West Point, N. Y.*

• *Tribute to a Husband*

THERE is a lovely story about Mrs. Dwight Morrow, wife of a man whose services to our country will long be remembered. Once at a banquet she was seated next to Paderewski. She told him that she had first heard him play when she was a student at Smith College.

Paderewski asked, "Do you go back to your alma mater very often?"

"No," replied Mrs. Morrow, "not as often as I should like. But I do like to go back to Smith and go into the quiet of the chapel and sit there for a few moments and think of my girlhood dreams that I used to have as a student there, and thank God that he has given me so much more in life than I ever dreamed of as a girl."

"What!" exclaimed Paderewski, "your life has really given you more than your girlhood dreams?"

"Why, yes," replied Mrs. Morrow.

Paderewski stood up and bowed to her, saying, "I must meet your husband."

Certainly the husband and wife had kept their romance alive by keeping a growing edge within their home and their relationship one to another.—*Frank A. Court, St. Paul Methodist, Lincoln, Neb.*

Bibliolatry

He knew the book from A to Z
His mind had mastered every part;
A fine achievement,—but alas!,—
It never got into his heart.

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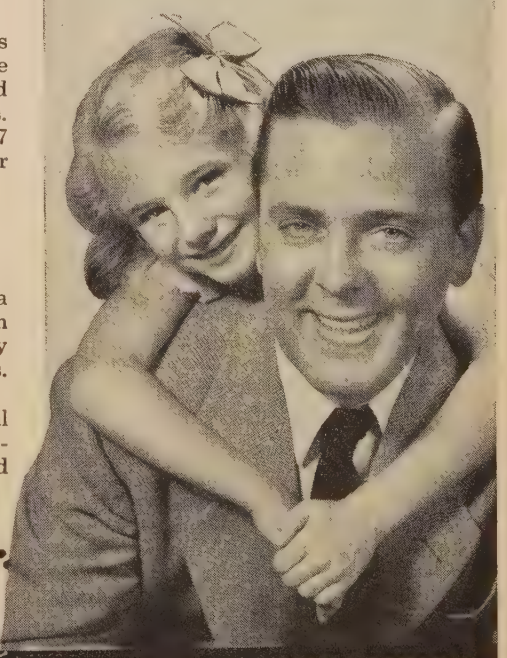

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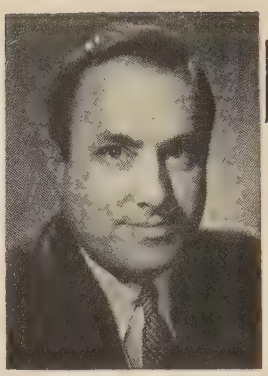

Ministry of Music

By Ernest K. Emurian

Offertories and Postludes

OFFERTORIES are generally too soft; postludes are usually too loud. Considering their relative importance in a service of worship, the softness and loudness should be reversed.

Offertory music, it is said, should not excite or arouse, but rather should quiet, soothe and calm the worshiper. This heresy may spring from the erroneous assumption that a palliative from the organ-chamber makes the act of giving money less painful. Or it may be a direct attempt to lull the prospective contributor half-asleep in the hope that he will be less conscious of what he is giving and consequently more generous. Musicians may be taking their cue from the modern dairy which boasts that its cows are "milked to music" (soft music, that is). This is supposed to convince the purchaser that the quality of the milk is thus enhanced and its volume increased. But while "milking to music" may be the latest technique in the dairy barn, it does not follow that it is equally applicable to Christian stewardship.

The act of self-giving is the highest point in corporate worship, as well as the deepest and loftiest resolve of the human heart. Therefore it should be accompanied by the blare of trumpets, the roll of drums and the clanging of a thousand cymbals, with a few resonances from the kettledrums thrown in for good measure. But no! We soften the blow with a dreamy rendition of "Träumerei," or give the patient several shots of spiritual penicillin with the dulciana and drug him with the sulfas of the stopped diapason.

Since we give ourselves when we give our money, we have a right to expect the *sforzando*, not the *pianissimo*. Better an original improvisation on hymn tune *Webb* ("Stand Up for Jesus") or *Ton-Y-Botel* ("Once to Every Man and Nation") than the dulcet sweetness of Brahms' "Lullaby" or the lilting grace of Beethoven's "Minuet in G"!

If money is to be *collected*, then perhaps it is well to create the "loveliest" atmosphere possible. But if the money is to be willingly, liberally and even joyously offered, then that's a horse of a different hue. The ushers merely receive what has already been freely offered, instead of collecting what is reluctantly parted with. While the latter may call for "Liebestraum," the former requires the "March of the Priests."

Organists are not to be expected to understand most of this, since they seldom enjoy the privilege of presenting their offerings with the rest of the congregation. This is especially true if the console is comfortably hidden away, far from the curious gaze of the minister and the members of the finance committee. The plea for a visible organist, presented in this column some months ago, is relevant here. It would encourage many a musician to be more faithful in his own giving, as well as color the quality of the selections used as offertories.

Now consider the postlude. The sermon has been preached; the mind has been stimulated and the heart warmed. High resolves are beginning to take hold. The closing hymn of dedication is sung, the benediction pronounced, and in a mood of reverence and meditation the worshiper prepares to leave the house of God to put into practice what he has heard and learned during the service. Suddenly the air is shattered by a series of deafening blasts from the organ, as if the organist is unwilling for the service to close without getting in the last word! The subsequent shock, with the conversation rising to higher, louder levels to be heard above the roaring music, jolts most of the benefits of the service from the poor worshiper and leaves him almost as cold as when he arrived. And he wonders who should have the last word: God, the preacher or the organist? Better a soft rendition of the recently sung hymn of dedication, or complete silence, than the earth-shaking thunders of the brilliant *sforzando* pedal!

Where this reversing of the proper mood for the offertory and postlude began, no one knows. Suffice it to say that the same tragedy is being repeated week after week in too many churches. Is it too much to ask organists to do something about it?

Or, having said our piece, should we just leave the matter to the providence of an all-wise Heavenly Father?

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Hymn for Today

O Master of the Perfect Life

Germany. L.M.

O Master of the perfect life,
We grieve because our fleeting days
Are marred with fear and sin and strife
And are not lived in God's full praise.

O Master of the truth and light,
Whose voice the people gladly heard,
May we be saved from error's night
By heeding thy eternal Word.

O Master of the healing hand,
Who had compassion for each soul,
Grant us to share the woes of man
And strive to make the wounded whole.

O Master of the place of prayer,
Teach us to know the peace and power
God gives to those who oft repair
To him in dark or shining hour.

O Master of love's wondrous way,
Who treated all with kingly grace,
Lead us to act in faith today
That love will win each heart and race.

O Master of the Kingdom goal,
Guide us to seek the greatest worth,
To give ourselves with burning soul
To know and bring God's reign on earth.

O Master who the cross didst bear,
Help us to take our pain and thorn
And through thy grace triumph to wear
The robes of resurrection morn

HERSCHEL T. HAMNER.

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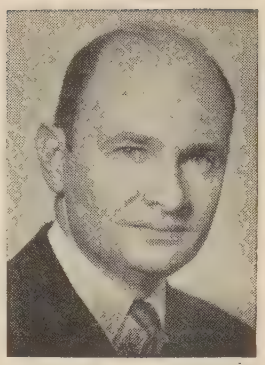

Come Let Us Worship

By Clarence Seidenspinner

The Benediction

IN many a Protestant church the full meaning of the benediction has been missed. Its words are often carelessly uttered like an afterthought and an appendage to the service that custom bids us retain. They constitute the moment when garments are surreptitiously buttoned, hymnbooks slipped into the pew racks and people get set for the final sprint out of the church. Yet for these blessed words many a worshiper has come to church.

Men and women long to live under the blessing of God, the state of grace epitomized by the benediction. They want to know and feel at all times the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. This is true concerning all sorts of men.

It is true of all who dwell together in families. Men and women want their homes to be a haven of peace, a dwelling place of God's spirit, a fellowship in which the blessed ministries of Christ are kept alive. This longing is true of all who are in the armed service, together with their families. We all want to feel that even though our boys and men have been taken from us to engage in armed conflict in distant places, nevertheless God is there too and they still live under his blessing and benediction. This is true of all who are sick, for people who are struggling with devastating illness greatly need the support of God's presence. Indeed they need to feel that in a very particular way the blessings of God are surrounding them in strengthening support. Yes, this is true of Christians everywhere. Men and women in all circumstances long to live under benediction, under the blessing and protection of God.

This longing was given classical expression in one of the most comforting and beautiful prayers of English literature, the well known words of John Henry Newman: "O Lord, support us all the day long of this troublous life, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then of thy mercy grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

There are many forms of the benediction, not all of them however, Christian. The Old Testament benediction is frequently used at the close of a Christian service, namely the familiar words: "The Lord bless you and keep you: the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you: the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen." But it is questionable whether this Old Testament benediction is sufficient for a Christian congregation. It may be used as a supplement to it, as John Hunter does in his devotional manual, but hardly as a substitute for the Triune blessing.

One of the simplest and best of all benedictions is the clear words of the New Testament: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen."

This benediction has been developed into a richer form used by many pastors and churches. Dr. Tittle of the First Methodist Church of Evanston, Illinois, was particularly fond of this benediction and generally used it. No one who attended the great service at First Church will ever forget those closing moments of worship when, in deepest understanding of the importance of living under benediction, and in resonant voice which touched the heart, Dr. Tittle would say: "The peace of God which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. Amen."

The benediction needs to be exalted in simple, effective ways which are largely dependent upon the attitude and manner of the pastor. By his own voice and attitude he can provide this exaltation. In speaking the words of blessing, he can give them such emphasis, such beauty, such breadth and depth of meaning that people will sense the blessing with which they are surrounded, with which they can leave the church and which they can carry with them all the week long. Sometimes placing the benediction directly before the last hymn will help to emphasize its importance. Sometimes seating the congregation for the benediction, which is then followed by a choral Amen, will help. Sometimes a recessional hymn, with the benediction spoken and a Nunc Dimittis or other choral response sung from the narthex of the church, will help. The benediction is a highly important part of the service.

ROUNDUP

Books in Brief

RENAISSANCE TO REFORMATION. By **Albert Hyma.** Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mich., $6.00. A scholarly and well documented review of the spiritual and temporal influences of medieval Europe. A must for the clergyman interested in a scholarly presentation of the backgrounds of those forces that are vying in the arena of world opinion in this our day.—*Frank L. Titus, All Saints' Episcopal, Syracuse, N. Y.*

YOUR CHURCH AND YOU. By **Fred P. Corson.** Winston, $2.50. Many pastors reading this book by the Methodist bishop of Philadelphia will say, "I could have written that if I had thought of it." That is a good tribute to the usefulness of the book for its purpose: to be read by laymen. While preachers will find some sermonic suggestions, this book ought not remain on the study shelf, but should be circulated among the laymen, perhaps beginning with official board members. If every member of the church would read and heed it, it would mean a strengthened church. There are 34 brief, pithy chapters, including "Your Church and Womanhood" and "Your Church and Youth," but none on the church and its men.—*C. Willard Fetter, First E.U.B., Akron, Ohio.*

SPRINGS OF LIVING WATER. By **Carl J. Scherzer.** Westminster, $1.50. This is one in the series of the "Westminster Pastoral Aid" books. The general editor is Russell Dicks, and this is surety that the book will be worth while. Ministers are not likely to find much that is new to them, but they are provided with a book which will be welcomed by many of the anxious patients whom they visit. To leave this book at the bedside may often provide a helpful ministry.—*Ernest Marshall Howse, Bloor Street United, Toronto, Canada.*

CHARIOTS OF FIRE. By **Clarence E. Macartney.** Abingdon-Cokesbury, $2.00. This book has had many predecessors from the mind, heart and pen of this famous Pittsburgh preacher. Those who are Macartney fans will find here familiar style and new material. The 18 sermons are based upon less familiar characters in the Bible and are amply illustrated with references from literature, travel and art. These sermons are among the best of their kind.—*C. Willard Fetter, First E.U.B., Akron, Ohio.*

LIVING WITHOUT HATE. By **Alfred J. Marrow.** Harper, $3.50. Preachers and all other would-be disseminators of good will need to read this tonic and practical approach to the problem of prejudice written by a psychology Ph.D. who keeps his feet on the ground as president of a textile company. Typical well meaning activity in the area of the improvement of human relations is compared to the report of the flight pilot to his passengers: "Folks, we're lost, but you'll be glad to know we are making good time." The remedy proposed by the author: "Action-research, wherein scientific appraisal of methods and results takes the place of the shot in the dark" and prejudices are overcome through group discovery of the facts and group decision to do something about them. The effectiveness of action-research is demonstrated in a number of recent projects described in these pages—indicating that President Roosevelt's hoped-for "science of human relationships" is coming into being. Religiously motivated leaders in the perennial war against hate will welcome the technique outlined by this "new science."—*George H. Orser, Fairmount Avenue Methodist, Richmond, Va.*

BIBLE HISTORY DIGEST. By **Elmer W. K. Mould.** Exposition Press, $3.00. This book falls somewhere between being a popular story of the Bible and a Bible dictionary. It should be a useful resource for college students, Sunday school teachers and busy pastors who need a handy reference on biblical history.—*Alton M. Motter, Executive Director, Chicago Sunday Evening Club.*

SERMONS FOR SPECIAL DAYS. By **Charles M. Crowe.** Abingdon-Cokesbury, $2.00. These sermons are pointed toward 18 of the most commonly observed days in the modern church calendar. It would be more correct to call the volume a source book of sermon material for special days, inasmuch as Dr. Crowe makes little effort to convey his own preaching style to the reader. Many pastors will not agree with the author's economic views in his Independence Day, Labor Day and Thanksgiving Day messages. But most ministers will be helped by the human interest stories, quotations, illustrations and information which the writer brings to each subject.—*Alton M. Motter, Executive Director, Chicago Sunday Evening Club.*

PREACHING FROM PROPHETIC BOOKS. By **Andrew W. Blackwood.** Abingdon-Cokesbury, $2.50. "On the basis of what they believed about God the prophets dealt largely and boldly with ethics." Preaching from the prophets is urgent for a generation whose moral convictions are weak because their knowledge of God is vague. Andrew W. Blackwood is pre-eminently the pastor's pastor and the preacher's preacher; thousands know him through his books. The minister will need other commentaries on the books of the prophets. The author has not attempted an exhaustive study of these books for this small volume. He lists other volumes for study. The purpose of this book is to stimulate preaching based on the writings of the prophets. There are many suggestions for timely sermons, and incentives to begin work on their preparation.—*Hampton Adams, Union Avenue Christian, St. Louis, Mo.*

WHERE JESUS WALKED. By **Frank McCoy Field.** Exposition Press, $3.00. The subtitle of this book describes quite well the author's purpose: "Through the Holy Land with the Master." The 20 chapters deal mainly with the principal places where the various episodes in Jesus' ministry occurred. The arrangement is chronological. From beginning to end, it is evident that the author has a deeply ingrained love for his subject. Through long years of devoted study, including postgraduate work in the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, he has acquainted himself with the history, geography and traditions of Palestine and its people. This, coupled with the ability to write interestingly and well, gives him competence to write this book. The book is especially valuable in that each study contains relevant material relating the locale not only to the New Testament period but also to the Old Testament and to more modern history, including the era of the crusades and even more recent times. After reading the book one has the feeling of having toured the Holy Land. —*Stiles Lessly, First Congregational, De Kalb, Ill.*

THE STORY TELLER OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION. By **Jeanette Perkins Brown.** Pilgrim Press, $2.00. Jeanette Perkins Brown has written several books for teachers of children in religious schools. As the title indicates, emphasis in this book is on the teacher as a story teller. The opening chapter discusses the need for good story tellers. The story is an invaluable tool of education. The author discusses forms of the story for the different age levels of children and young people. She deals with such practical questions as how to get ready to tell the story, the advantage of telling rather than reading the story, where to find the sources of true stories, and the use of Bible stories. A collection of stories is given at the end of the book.—*Hampton Adams, Union Ave. Christian, St. Louis, Mo.*

WHAT THE JEWS BELIEVE. By **Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein.** Farrar, Straus & Young, $1.25. Expanded from an article in *Life*, Rabbi Bernstein's slender volume is a well written summary of modern liberal Judaism, particularly as seen through its holy days. After brief statements on Jewish theology, Rabbi Bernstein builds his book on the statement of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch: "The catechism of the Jew is his calendar." Taking up the holy festivals one by one, the author manages delightfully to capture the mood and meaning of each. For those who know of Judaism only what they have read in the Bible, this book is a "must." For those whose knowledge is of its formal dogma, *What the Jews Believe* will prove fascinating reading.—*Robert I. Kahn, Congregation Emanu El, Houston, Tex.*

(★★★★You can't afford to be without it; ★★★Unusually valuable to the preacher; ★★Above average in its field; ★A good buy; No star, depends on your taste and need.)

Books Preachers Are Reading

An analysis based on reports from leading religious book sellers and from the reading of The Pulpit's distinguished editorial associates and book reviewers.

October	November	This Month	
	1	1	**The Life We Prize.** *Elton Trueblood. Harper,* $2.50
1	2	2	**Communism, Democracy and Catholic Power.** *Paul Blanchard. Beacon Press,* $3.50
5	4	3	**Basic Christian Ethics.** *Paul Ramsey. Scribners,* $3.75
8	3	4	**Strengthening the Spiritual Life.** *Nels Ferré. Harper,* $1.00
6	5	5	**Wake Up or Blow Up.** *Frank C. Laubach. Revell,* $2.00
	6	6	**Monday to Friday Is Not Enough.** *Frederick M. Meek. Oxford,* $3.00
	7	7	**Protestant Thought in the Twentieth Century.** *Arnold S. Nash. Macmillan,* $3.75
		8	**The Interpreter's Bible,** *Vol. VII. Abingdon-Cokesbury,* $8.75
		9	**Christ and Culture.** *H. Richard Niebuhr. Harper,* $3.50
		10	**Rediscovering the Bible.** *B. W. Anderson. Association Press,* $3.50

The Editor's Page

The Event of the Month

THE WHOLE of American Protestantism was shocked by President Truman's appointment of "an ambassador extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary" to the head of the Roman Catholic Church. His use of the phrase "state of Vatican City," instead of "church," will deceive no one who knows that "Vatican City" comprises a territory about the size of a golf course and a population of about 1,000 residents of or employees in the Vatican compound. To send to such a "state" an official government representative bearing so grandiose a title would be ridiculous. Of course, this is not at all what the appointment means. The appointee is being sent to the head of the worldwide Roman Catholic Church. If he is confirmed by the Senate, the official diplomatic processes of the Roman church will be interlocked with the official diplomatic processes of the American government. This is the precise opposite of separation of church and state. It is a union of church and state. It is an establishment of a particular religion. The Roman church is thereby given a secret and privileged access to the ear of our government which no Protestant church would accept. Protestantism is more nearly united on this issue than on any public issue the nation now faces. From the pulpit of every church, north, south, east and west, this opposition will be voiced and it will surely be communicated in letters and interviews to members of the senate. Mr. Truman claims that he has been seeking to unite Protestant and Catholic forces behind his policies. Instead, he has divided them still more deeply by his high-handed defiance of the constitutional provision which was designed to preclude the thrusting of religious conflicts into our political processes.

The President Defies The Constitution!

The Book of the Month

LIFE'S MEANING, *by Henry P. Van Dusen. Association Press, $2.50.*

THIS BOOK is addressed particularly to youth, and to the problems faced by young people in colleges and universities. But just because this is so, it speaks to the condition of everyone, young or old. The question as to the meaning of human existence has become the most pressing question which modern man confronts. It is the ultimate question asked by philosophy, but philosophy can offer no satisfying answer. Science is dumb before it. Only Christian faith has the answer. But we, the exponents of the Christian faith, while we may be ever so sure of its answer, are troubled because we have not yet found the way to make it clear and convincing to a generation which raises the question in forms with which we are not too familiar. Dr. Van Dusen has been living with youth all his life as their teacher and counselor. He knows their perplexities and feels them himself as they feel them. His answer to their ultimate question is not merely in the well worn words of Christian apologetic, but in language that both youth and age can understand. Ministers will find this book an interpretation of the Christian gospel which will give them a new insight not only into the mind of our bewildered generation, but into the Christian faith itself. It will inspire many a sermon, and also affect the minister's attitude toward his people.

A Thought for the Month

THE CUSTOM of dividing public opinion on public issues into three parties—conservative, liberal and middle—is giving way increasingly to the division into left, right and center. This is due partly to the fact that the terms "conservative" and "liberal" have lost the meaning they once had. In a more stable society, they aptly suggested those who supported the status quo and those who advocated innovation. But our modern society has been so shot through with innovation that there is hardly any status quo left! It is dangerous for the church to allow this new formula to creep into its thinking. It is too easily assumed that, because the social ideals of the churches a generation ago were "leftist," the church must always be on the political left. Those who proceed on this assumption point out that there is little if any left wing criticism of the present government, and they call upon the churches to provide some! The suggestion that present policies might be constructively criticized by the right is spurned by these leaders, on the ground that the right is inspired by self-interest or hysteria. As if there was no self-interest on the left! This, in my judgment, would be a bad state of mind for the Christian church to fall into. It implies that, no matter how far leftward the government goes, the churches must go farther! I believe this conception should be sharply rejected. My conclusion is that those leaders who think in these terms are unawarely using the church for their own purposes or are the victims of the abstract and mechanical formula of left-right-center. The churches should beware lest they be caught in the same trap.

Beware the Formula: Left-Right-Center!

Charles Clayton Morrison

For the Record—

IT was with no little trepidation that we printed in October the advisory ballot asking Pulpit readers to tell us just what they thought about the way we are doing our job. The response has been favorable beyond our most optimistic hopes. You have told us what you like and what you don't like; we needed to know both. But what makes us happy is the fact that after sympathetically criticizing the job we are doing 91 per cent of those voting said they like the "new" Pulpit. Our research consultant tells us that in a vote like this 20 per cent of the total favorable votes should be added to get a true picture since those who object are much more likely to vote than those who are satisfied. If that rule were applied, our ballot indicates that 109 per cent of our readers are satisfied customers! No wonder we are pleased at the outcome of the vote.

We have decided, however, not to add that 20 per cent. We think the results speak for themselves without it. 82 per cent of those voting feel that the sermons are well chosen. 81.6 per cent think they are just the right length. (8.2 per cent think them too short; 10.2 per cent said they are too long.) 87.8 per cent think the articles well chosen. 75.5 per cent agree with us that the columnists have improved the value of the journal. 75 per cent find the illustrations helpful; 88.4 per cent want the same number or more pulpit paragraphs to appear each month.

We weren't too sure what would be the reaction to our new cover. Admittedly, it is something of a departure in religious journalism. Imagine, then, our surprise when 95.5 per cent of the voters assured us that they like it!

Sermon Summaries is another story. Only 52.2 per cent find these condensations usually helpful. 42.5 per cent ask for less of them. (In fact, attached comments suggested we might leave them out altogether.) But 57.5 per cent of the ballots said continue to print as many as at present. Indeed, 29.8 per cent asked for more than we are now using. We are in somewhat of a quandary to know which half of our readers to follow. Can some of you who did not vote help us at this point by letting us know what you think?

We are interested in knowing the order in which our readers go about reading The Pulpit. We found out. The great majority read the sermons first. After that, in order, they read: the leading article, the editorials, Enslin, the book page, pulpit paragraphs, the second article, sermon summaries, pulpit post, titles and texts, Seidenspinner, Emurian, for the record, the calendar.

More about our findings next month; and a final report on what you decided about your next year's editorial associates. G. E. H.

The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching

Founded 1929

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